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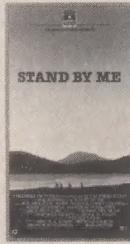
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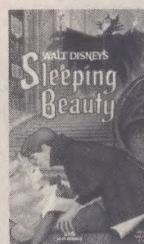


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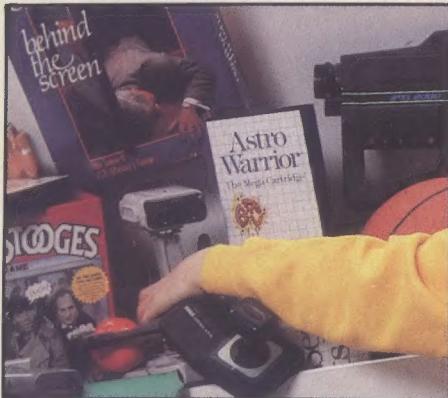
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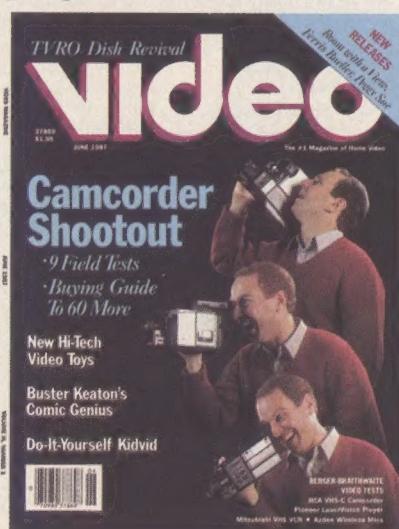
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About the Cover. Three camcorder formats (top to bottom: VHS, Compact VHS, 8mm) present a real challenge to the consumer. Photography by Jay Brenner.

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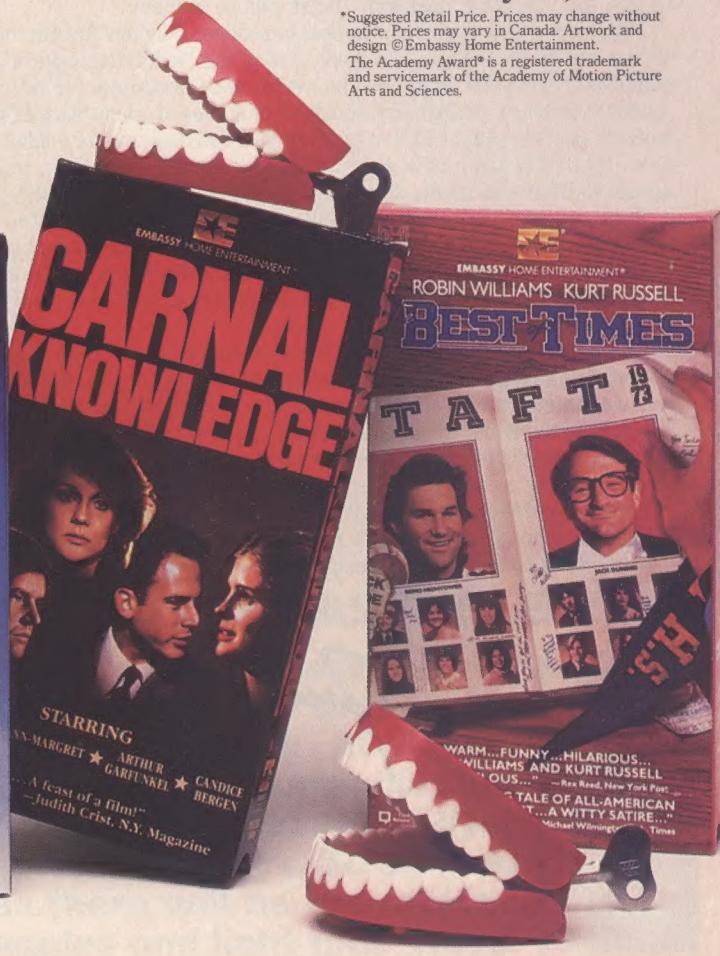
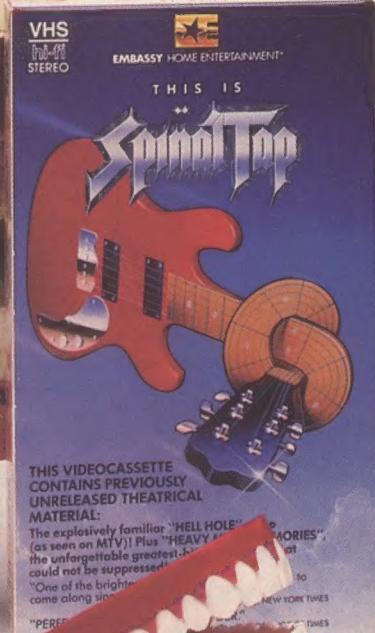
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Channel One

Year of the Camcorder

It's hard to believe that as recently as January, 1981 VIDEO Magazine described "the camera-and-VCR-in-one combination" as the "most wanted unavailable product." It wasn't until mid-1983, in fact, that Sony came out with the first camcorder—the BMC-110 or Betamovie. Yet another year was to pass before models in other formats appeared: JVC's GR-C1U Compact VHS and Kodak's Series 2000 8mm. (G.E. had announced an 8mm model that January, but Kodak's hit the market first.) And April 1985 had rolled around before the first full-sized camcorder, the Panasonic PV100 Omnidisc, debuted.

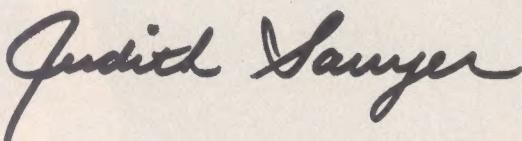
Since then, the number of models and brands has taken a quantum leap. Now, just two short years later, some 80 different models in three formats and one subformat, by about 30 manufacturers, are available. And more are on the way, Samsung's 4mm unit among them. To help cut through the confusion, we bring you the "Great Camcorder Shootout of 1987." Here, in addition to an up-to-the-minute buyer's guide, three writers field-test nine camcorders in three formats. Their candid comments should help you focus on your own needs, so you will know what to look for, and what questions to ask before you buy.

There is in addition a further option, introduced only this April at the International Toy Fair in New York. We think of it as the "kidcorder," but it's billed by its manufacturer, Fisher-Price, as Pixelvision, the "camcorder for kids." The picture quality is nothing to write home about—11 minutes of grainy black & white video on audio cassettes—but at \$150 it may not be a bad deal, even for adults. To find out more about this and a new generation of innovative video toys, from interactive robots to child-size media dens, turn to "The Video Toy Chest."

With the camcorder-kid connection established, we go a step further with Catherine Cellia's "Do-It-Yourself Kidvid," an entertaining account of how to shoot home videos with your kids—with the child in the director's seat. It includes tips on auxiliary equipment, props, story ideas, scenarios, and more, from a family that dared to do it.

On the home-viewing front, "Where's Buster" by Frank Lovece takes an aficionado's look at the long, tumultuous career of Buster Keaton and why, despite renewed interest, only a handful of his classic comedies are available on tape. In "Back from the Brink," long-time industry analyst Bob Angus brings you the latest word on home dish systems: the new equipment and features, how good they are, what they cost to own and operate, and the prognosis for the future.

Finally, we'd like to welcome Wolf Schneider as a contributor to "The Gazette." Schneider, who is on the staff of *The Hollywood Reporter*, will keep readers up to date on West Coast video developments.



video

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Fast Forward

Edited By Stan Pinkwas

Late-Breaking News

A Format Named ED

In the beginning was Beta. And Beta begat VHS, and VHS begat SuperBeta, and SuperBeta begat HQ, and HQ begat Hi-Band, and Hi-Band begat Super VHS. And now there's ED ("extended definition") Beta, Sony's response to JVC's format-boosting innovation.

Due in Japan this fall, with no U.S. date yet scheduled, ED Beta reportedly delivers 500 lines of horizontal resolution (to Super VHS's 430) using a metal particle-type tape. Like Super VHS, it will cost more, be only partially compatible with the present format, and require TVs with separate luminance and chrominance inputs to fully display its prowess. Sony's announcement sets the stage for yet another round of format wars, though at a rarefied level since it may be some time before these twin advances significantly erode the positions of Beta and VHS as we know them now.

Super TVs For Super VHS

Super VHS, meanwhile, should benefit from some new product announcements and a ringing endorsement. The products are four color TVs JVC will introduce, initially in Japan, with "S" terminals for separate luminance and chrominance lines for Super VHS (and presumably ED Beta) VCRs. The sets, ranging from 19 to 27 inches, will also include MTS, surround sound processors, and horizontal resolutions up to 560 lines. U.S. plans for the TVs

have not been announced.

The thumbs-up comes from industry guru Joseph Roizen. Roizen, president of Telegen, a broadcast consulting firm, told a recent meeting of the International Tape/Disc Association that the Super VHS system he had seen in Japan delivered an "almost unbelievable" improvement in luminance resolution, and "broadcast-quality pictures...the likes of which one only expects to see on a studio monitor in a broadcast station or post-production house." He concluded by calling Super VHS a "giant step" in the effort to deliver high-quality television images.

Cassette Countdown

Alfredo Leone and Joe Synder seem to have invented a video improvement no one wants. The film producer and engineer have crafted a videotape cassette that can count the number of times it's played, but they have yet to convince a film studio or video distributor to try the device. Hurdles include fears of upsetting existing business relationships, driving up tape rental prices, and angering consumers who like to watch pre-recorded films or scenes more than once.

Russia Challenges U.S. Tape Pirates

Even as Soviet citizens are gaining access under the new policy of *glasnost*, or openness, to once-banned films, Soviet officials are cracking down on Russian films distributed in the U.S.

They're targeting 235 titles available as pirated videotapes, some of which, they claim, were on tape here before they were in theaters in the Soviet Union. "The situation is so dangerous to our interests that we need the help of American lawyers," said Oleg Rudnev, chairman of Sovietexportfilm, Russia's national film sales agency.

Bar Code Beachhead

VCRs able to read bar codes may soon appear here in models by Panasonic, Quasar, and Magnavox. The system, already available in Japan, uses a wireless wand to scan programming information printed in bar code form. The wand then transmits the data by infrared signals to the VCR. The system has the potential to eliminate much of the complexity of programming VCRs. However, hardware makers have yet to convince publishers, including *TV Guide*, to publish program listings in bar code form. The obstacle, say publishers, is that U.S. TV listings are too complicated. Of course, that's partly why timers are hard to handle.

Zenith's Dish Expectations

Zenith, the only company with a console TV able to decode teletext transmissions, has unveiled a 27-inch "concept" stereo TV that can receive satellite transmissions, decode scrambled stations, position a backyard dish, and operate a VCR. Though this particular model may never see dealer

shelves, Zenith hopes it will prompt a new species of integrated, satellite-friendly TVs.

TV Renters Add Decks and Cams

TV rental stores, many of which now offer camcorders, are finding that more consumers are asking for VCRs and other kinds of video equipment, according to a report by the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations. The study also found that the most popular TV rental is a 19-inch color portable, for an average price of \$43 per month.

Hollywood Bound

Despite the feisty independence of the country's video rental stores, home video and broadcast video are still dominated by a relatively small group of film studios. According to the National Cable Television Association, the seven film companies—Twentieth Century Fox, Columbia, MGM/UA, Warner Bros., Paramount, MCA (Universal), and Disney—that garnered 62 percent of 1985's video-cassette receipts also netted 73 percent of the box office take, 39 percent of the syndicated TV episodes, and 37 percent of network television's license fees in 1986.

Sixth Sense

Add Konica to the blank tape companies offering discounts in the form of free cassettes. Videophiles buying a five-pack of Konica's SR VHS T-120 tape through July can get a sixth cassette free by sending in proofs of purchase.

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Feedback

Readers Air Their Views

How Super Is It?

We all knew Super VHS would come sooner or later ("Super VHS—A Great Leap Forward?", Apr. 1987). What we seem to have is a new tape format not fully compatible with existing VHS machines, and with a technology that forces tape producers to deal with multiple recording methods, two types of VHS tape and three high performance audio recording/playback approaches. Murray Slovick's optimism is unwarranted. It may take five to ten years for Super VHS to become accepted. By then, we will have high definition and probably laser-based digital videodisc recorders. In the end it will be the confused consumer who loses.

Hal Ryman
Bethesda, Md.

Murray Slovick's Super VHS report reads like a JVC public relations tract. How can we believe an article where the information is "according to JVC," given the company's false claim that SuperBeta was incompatible with existing Beta machines? The term Super VHS suggests a similarity to SuperBeta, but Super VHS recordings cannot be played back on present VHS machines while there are no compatibility problems with the Betas. In reality Super VHS is a new format, and Slovick's prediction that pre-recorded Super VHS cassettes are soon to come is a large assumption.

Thomas E. Hilton
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Laser Rot Talk

Thanks for airing what is known about laser rot ("Laser Rot," Apr. '87). I was bitten by the laser bug five years ago and find it difficult to accept less. Fortunately, I've never experienced any laser deterioration in a collection exceeding 300 titles. Hats off to Pioneer for its fair and generous exchange policy. That's what I call backing your product. If Pioneer can support its product to this extent, I can afford to be supportive.

Ernie Gitti
San Francisco, Calif.

Thanks for your informative and accurate article, "Laser Rot." I am an audio-videoophile addicted to the laser video format, and my own observations confirm those in your article. Although my

collection is not "rotting," discs that were bad were replaced by Pioneer without question, and the hardware and software continue to get better. Also, with the addition of your "New Videodisc Releases" section in the "Directory," laser video is starting to get the attention it deserves.

Ron Gustafson
Cassadaga, N.Y.

I thought your article on laser rot was quite even-handed. I am also pleased with Pioneer's long-range commitment to guarantee the durability of its software. However, I do not think it is fair to characterize as "fastidious" consumers who object to continuing problems with inclusion and speckling. Videodiscs manufactured by 3M have no such defects and imports from Japan have very little. Pioneer's Carson, Calif. plant is still number three and must try harder.

Bob Stephens
San Francisco, Calif.

Your research for "Laser Rot" seems incomplete. The article implies that Donovan Scott had trouble with laser rot on the LaserDisc of *Sheena*. This was not the case. *Sheena* suffered from pressing problems that induced color loss. Next, *Greystoke* suffered from crosstalk, not laser rot for the most part. TechniDisc's pressings of *Alvin Rides Again*, *Avenging Angel*, *Heart of the Stag*, and other films suffered from this problem as well as video noise. Third, there are reports that laser rot can be seen under a microscope though results have not been published. In the case of TechniDisc, the rot appeared to be fungal growth that developed from the glue.

The LaserDisc Corporation has asked dealers to accept faulty discs from customers that are new purchases, but to direct discs that have become faulty to LDC itself, not the stores. It is unfair to write about a problem with discs and limit the focus to California stores.

Steven Stumbris
Vice Pres., Budget Video, Inc.
Los Angeles, Calif.

Rod Woodcock and Marc Wielage reply:
Bob Stephens is right, 3M has not had problems with laser rot—a fact we should have emphasized—largely, we believe, because the company uses a pressing process

that differs from Pioneer's injection molding technique. Steven Stumbris is also right about Sheena and half-right about Greystoke. The latter disc's laser rot was compounded by a poor pressing.

Amos n' Adolf

I found Scott Isler's critique of "Amos n' Andy: Anatomy of a Controversy" (Feb. '87) insulting. Comparing Nazi Germany with *Amos n' Andy* is outlandish. The show was intended to make us laugh. Kingfish's wild schemes are no different than Ralph Kramden's, his corn games are like Sgt. Bilko's, and the exaggerated black dialect is no more offensive here than in *Sanford and Son* and *Good Times*.

Marc Leichter
Rockaway, N.Y.

Rear View Review

Where have you guys been? The rear-view video monitors used in Japanese buses ("Fast Forward," Apr. '87) have been in U.S. airports for at least five years. At Boston's Logan International Airport, buses so equipped take you to and from the terminal building and the auto rental area.

Barry Jay Schwartz
Bala-Cynwyd, Penn.

Details, Details...

Based upon the glowing review of the Sony CCD-V110 8mm camcorder ("Videotests," Dec. '87), I added it to my inventory of three Sony CCD-V8AF/AFU camcorders. But the review failed to mention that when you use macro to transfer prints or 8mm movies, you can't disconnect the built-in microphone to cut out projector noise. Nor did you mention that once you set the camera down it can't be turned on because the on/off button is on the hand grip.

James Bartman
Port Charlotte, Fla.

Correction

The price for Instant Replay's Image Translator VHS VCR ("New Products," Mar. '87) should have read \$1,995.

VIDEO welcomes your comments and questions. Please do not enclose self-addressed envelopes with letters as the volume of mail does not permit personal replies. All letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address correspondence to **Feedback**, **VIDEO Magazine**, 460 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001.



SOMETIMES THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING HAS A FEW THINGS TOO MANY.

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The Gazette

EDITED BY IRA ROBBINS

Tin Can Alley

Are you ready for the Spike Jones revival? In the 1940s and early '50s Spike perfected a madcap musical style that lambasted pop tunes and classical repertoire with equal abandon. A man for all media, Spike paid as much attention to the visual as the aural aspect of his performances. A couple of years ago his son, Spike Jr., assembled a 50-minute videocassette proving that Spike Jones and His City Slickers were as much fun to watch as to hear. Now Paramount has

reissued *The Best of Spike Jones Vol. 1* video; volume two is imminent, with more programs planned after that.

Credit Paramount's Tim Clott for getting the tape into video stores. "I've been a Spike Jones fan since I was

five years old," Clott says, apparently proudly. "The humor is very much today, as much as Monty Python—off-the-wall, very funny." The videotapes, from 1950s TV shows, aren't the only signs of a Jones renaiss-



Spike Jones and His City Slickers

sance. Early this year a group of musicians enjoyed a two-month New York club stand by carefully—but hilariously—recreating City Slickers arrangements. And last year saw the publication of a painstakingly researched, 400-page "bio-discography" of the man who brought car horns, train bells, police whistles, and tuned Flit guns (not to mention revolvers, a stethoscope, and a toilet seat) to the concert hall.

Jones died in 1965, but his son sees home video as creating a "marketplace for non-'A' title material. People's tastes are becoming more varied." What would Spike Sr. think of all the newfound attention? "He'd be floored," Jones Jr. says. "It astounds me."

—Scott Isler

Sid's Nancy

The friendly, intelligent voice on the telephone sounds nothing like the deranged screech/whine of Nancy Spungen, co-headliner of Alex Cox's gloomy punk-love-and-drugs story, *Sid & Nancy*. Yet both belong to Chloe Webb. Having so little in common with the tragic real-life figure she portrays, it's amazing Webb could convincingly inhabit such an unfamiliar persona. How did she

handle the role? "You get a character like Nancy going and it coats your mind. You instinctively do the right thing." During the 11-week shoot, she (and Gary Oldman, who played Sid Vicious) "didn't leave character except to sleep."

Webb found making the picture "pretty depressing," a physical and emotional drain. "It was mad, very wearing. *Sid & Nancy* was extremely difficult to make; everyone had queasy feelings about it." Discounting criticisms that director Cox played fast and loose with the

facts and personalities of the Sex Pistols, Webb explains, "The story is true to the essence of those two people, not the Pistols or the spirit of punk." How Sid and Nancy saw themselves was "way out of line with reality," she remarks; viewers must "enter their world and see things from their point of view."

With her first starring appearance newly released on videocassette, Webb is wasting no time. She's already completed *The Belly of an Architect* with Brian Dennehy and has other films in the works.

—Ira Robbins

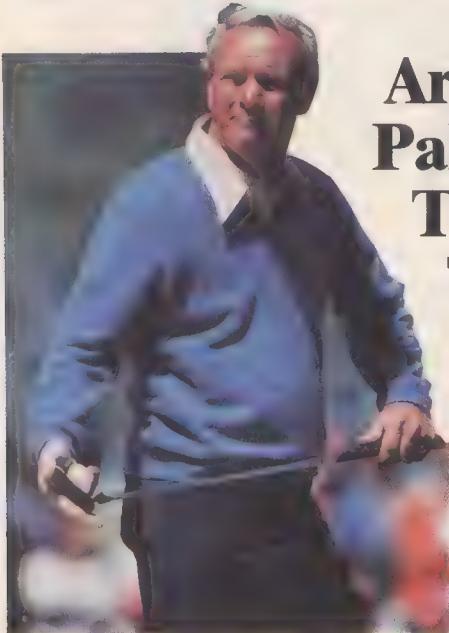


Video Cram Course

For graduates of Classics Comics, Cliff Notes has long been the textbook of choice by late, lazy, or impatient students. Best Film and Video has now modernized the concept with *Classic Books on Video*. The reasoning is simple—since many of today's college students grew up with *Sesame Street* and the like, they're attuned to using the TV as a source of knowledge. And few would disagree that watching TV, even *Masterpiece Theatre*, is easier than slogging through Dostoevski.

—Adam Philips

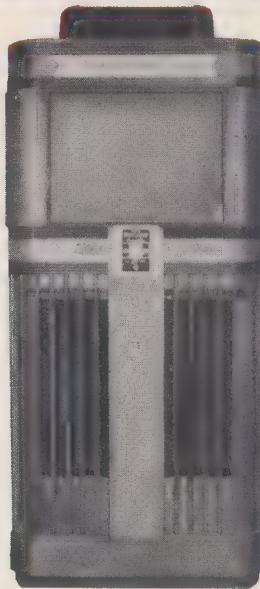
Arnold Palmer Tape Tour



Instructional golf video has become so prevalent that it lacks any news value, unless the golfer making the tape is Arnold Palmer. Which is precisely what he was doing in February at his spectacular new Isleworth Golf & Country Club in Orlando, Florida, where joining costs \$25,000 and annual dues run \$2,100. Also newsworthy is the co-venture between Vestron Video, which will release two cassettes of Palmer's *Play Great Golf* this month, and Dolphin/Double-day, which will publish a companion book shortly thereafter.

For Arnie, who has written four prior golf instructional videos, video is by far the preferred teaching tool. But he doesn't feel his video release will diminish book sales. "The videos will supplement the book, rather than make it obsolete," he says. "While almost every American is using video now for educational purposes or whatever, the need for reading—as well as viewing—will always be there. Some people may get more value out of one or the other, but I think they'll benefit the most by combining the two." —Jim Bessman

Titles currently available in the series include *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Hamlet*, and *The Iliad*. Each 40-minute tape is narrated by an actor in costume who gives a breakdown of the plot and leads into enactments of critical scenes. There are also two breaks in which the narrator suggests questions for viewers to think about in upcoming scenes. The tapes, now available in campus bookstores, go for \$19.95 apiece.



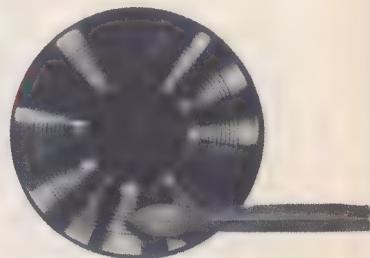
low-budget, sexist (lotsa leggy cheesecake), racist, and sometimes even of musical merit. "We picked the ones we thought were the most fun," says Dan O'Donnell, co-producer of the videotape. O'Donnell discovered *Soundies* through Howard Hays, director of commercial services at the UCLA Film Archives. Hays knew someone with an extensive collection of the films, which—unlike the music—are in the public domain. So the choice of clips, admits O'Donnell, "is based on what we could get clearance on musically."

That would explain the absence from *Volume 1* of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Fats Waller, among the big name artists who made

Music Video From the '40s

Ozzie Nelson and Lawrence Welk didn't need their MTV (or should we say VH-1)—they and hundreds of other musical acts had "Soundies." A World War II-era phenomenon, Soundies were song clips made on 16mm film to be shown in a visual jukebox called a Panoram. Long forgotten by most people, Active Home Video has now brought the shorts back to the small screen with an hour-long tape compilation.

Soundies Volume 1 makes a good primer for music-clip archaeologists. The films are



Soundies. O'Donnell is planning future volumes that one hopes will include such acts. In the meantime, you can check out Spade Cooley's western swing, Larry Clinton's big band, the Hoosier Hot Shots, and the Harlem Cuties among the 20 clips now in permanent rotation on *Soundies Volume 1*.

—Scott Isler

The Two Percent Solution

A new industry survey projects that sales of videocassettes—that's sales, not rentals—will hit the 100 million mark this year, rising to 235 million by decade's end. The leap results in part from the growing proportion of homes that now have VCRs, which is heading towards 50 percent. The report also cited dropping prices, the larger number of special interest tapes sold through specialty stores, and

changes in the distribution process itself.

Amazingly, at least two percent of that 100 million figure will come from *Top Gun*, which shipped 1.9 million copies to start. The previous record holder, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, sold 1.4 million. *Top Gun*'s low cost, and its hand-in-hand ad campaign with Pepsi-Cola, helped boost sales into the stratosphere.

—Adam Philips



Island's Cash Crop

Cathy Tyson and Bob Hoskins in 'Mona Lisa.'

Cool. Happening. *Auteur*-oriented yet commercial. On a roll. That's Island Pictures, the film company behind such off-beat successes as *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (made for less than \$2 million, it grossed \$18 million-plus at the box office and shipped platinum on videocassette), *Mona Lisa*

(also produced for less than \$2 million, it has earned over \$8 million), and the really surprising hit, *She's Gotta Have It*. Produced for just \$175,000, Spike Lee's sex comedy has already made \$8 million.

The genesis of Hollywood's hottest independent film company dates back to

1961, when Chris Blackwell, later the founder of Island Records (Traffic, Cat Stevens, Bob Marley), became a producer's assistant on *Dr. No*. These days, the globe-trotting executive continues to run the label and drops in on his L.A. film company one week each month to approve projects.

While he's away, president Russell Schwartz and senior VP of production Jesse Beaton mind the shop with a free-spirited outlook they inherited from Blackwell. "We want to make films that would probably not be made at the studios," says the 35-year-old Beaton. "They've got to have commercial viability, and at the same time be artistically interesting and somewhat daring."

This year Island will re-

lease ten or eleven films, producing at least half itself. The schedule includes a romantic comedy, *Sweet Lies*, with Treat Williams, Joanna Pacula, and Julianne Phillips—Mrs. Bruce Springsteen ("Her screen test was good," assures Beaton); *Straight to Hell*, a take-off on spaghetti Westerns from *Sid & Nancy* director Alex Cox, starring Joe Strummer, Grace Jones, Dennis Hopper, and Elvis Costello; director Wayne Wang's *Slam Dance*, a Hitchcockian thriller with Tom Hulce (*Amadeus*) and Harry Dean Stanton; and *Jimmy Reardon*, in which River Phoenix (*Stand By Me*, *The Mosquito Coast*) stars as an 18-year-old coming of age in 1963. All will ultimately be released on home video by CBS/Fox. —Wolf Schneider

TOP 40 SALES AND RENTALS

CASSETTE RENTALS	CASSETTE SALES	VIDEODISC SALES	KIDVID SALES
1. <i>Aliens</i> (—). 1986. 138m. (R) \$89.98. CBS/Fox.	1. <i>Top Gun</i> (—). 1986. 110m. (R) \$26.95. Paramount.	1. <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (—). 1959. 75m. (G) \$29.95. Disney.	1. <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1). 1959. 75m. (G) \$29.95. Disney.
2. <i>Back to School</i> (1). 1986. 97m. (PG-13) \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.	2. <i>Jane Fonda's Low Impact Aerobic Workout</i> (1). 1986. 50m. \$39.95. Karl.	2. <i>The Karate Kid Part II</i> (1). 1986. 113m. (PG) LV \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.	2. <i>Pinocchio</i> (2). 1940. 87m. (G) \$29.95. Disney.
3. <i>Top Gun</i> (—). 1986. 110m. (R) \$26.95. Paramount.	3. <i>Jane Fonda's New Workout</i> (2). 1985. 90m. \$39.95. Karl.	3. <i>9 1/2 Weeks</i> (—). 1986. 116m. (R) LV \$34.95. MGM/UA.	3. <i>Dumbo</i> (4). 1941. 64m. \$29.95. Disney.
4. <i>Ruthless People</i> (—). 1986. 94m. (R) \$79.95. Touchstone.	4. <i>Callanetics</i> (4). 1986. 60m. \$19.95. MCA.	4. <i>Labyrinth</i> (2). 1986. 116m. (PG) LV \$34.95. Embassy.	4. <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (3). 1951. 75m. (G) \$29.95. Disney.
5. <i>The Karate Kid Part II</i> (2). 1986. 113m. (PG) \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.	5. <i>Aliens</i> (—). 1986. 138m. (R) \$89.98. CBS/Fox.	5. <i>Running Scared</i> (—). 1986. 107m. (R) LV \$39.95. MGM/UA.	5. <i>The Sword in the Stone</i> (6). 1963. 79m. (G) \$79.98. Disney.
6. <i>Running Scared</i> (—). 1986. 107m. (R) \$79.95. MGM/UA.	6. <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (3). 1959. 75m. (G) \$29.95. Disney.	6. <i>Young Sherlock Holmes</i> (6). 1986. 109m. (PG-13) LV \$39.95. Paramount.	6. <i>Robin Hood</i> (5). 1973. 83m. (G) \$29.95. Disney.
7. <i>About Last Night</i> (—). 1986. 113m. (R) \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.	7. <i>Help!</i> (—). 1965. 90m. (G) \$69.95. MPI.	7. <i>Howard the Duck</i> (—). 1986. 111m. (PG) LV \$34.98. MCA.	7. <i>Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too</i> (8). 1974. 25m. \$14.95. Disney.
8. <i>Heartburn</i> (—). 1986. 109m. (R) \$79.95. Paramount.	8. <i>Kathy Smith's Body Basics</i> (8). 1985. 60m. \$29.95. JCI.	8. <i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i> (3). 1984. 118m. (PG) LV \$39.95. Paramount.	8. <i>Teddy Ruxpin: Escape From the Treacherous Mountains</i> (—). 1986. 35m. \$12.95. Hi-Tops.
9. <i>Big Trouble in Little China</i> (5). 1986. 99m. (PG-13) \$79.98. CBS/Fox.	9. <i>Star Wars</i> (9). 1977. 121m. (PG) \$29.98. CBS/Fox.	9. <i>Armed and Dangerous</i> (—). 1986. 88m. (PG-13) LV \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.	9. <i>Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day</i> (—). 1968. 25m. \$14.95. Disney.
10. <i>Extremities</i> (8). 1986. 89m. (R) \$79.95. Paramount.	10. <i>The Secrets of the Titanic</i> (5). 1986. 60m. \$29.95. Vestron.	10. <i>Back to the Future</i> (8). 1985. 116m. (PG) LV \$34.98. MCA.	10. <i>Teddy Ruxpin: Guest of the Grunges</i> (—). 1986. 35m. \$12.95. Hi-Tops.

Number in parentheses indicates position last month; (—) indicates a new listing.

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HIT MAN.

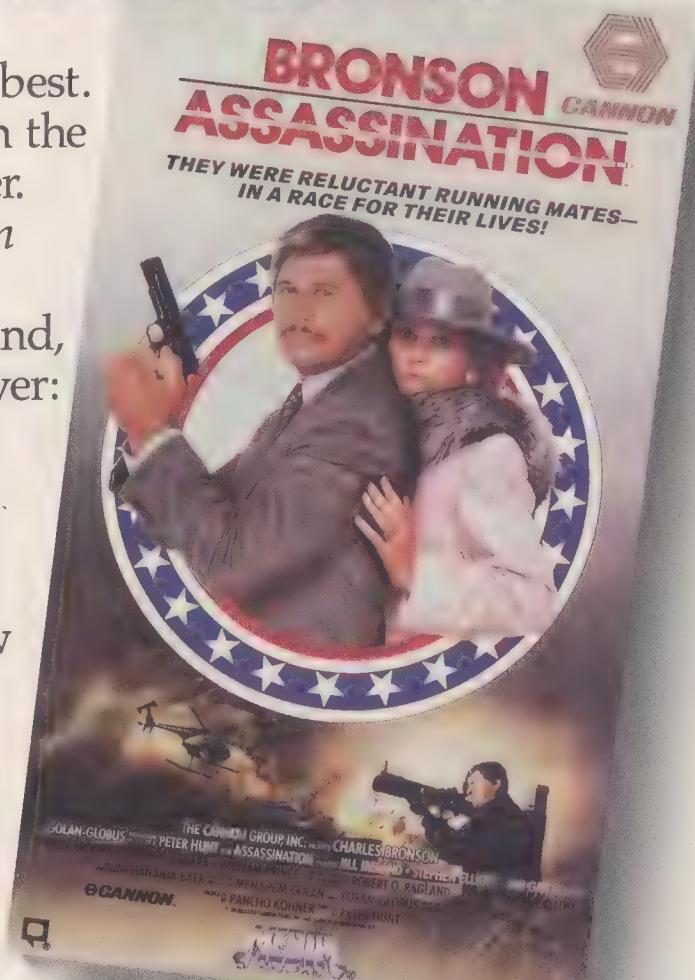
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MEDIA HOME ENTERTAINMENT
A Home Communications, Inc. Company
Los Angeles, California



WEST COAST NOTES

By Wolf Schneider



Wasn't 9-1/2 Weeks Enough for Him?

Sexy Mickey Rourke (*Year of the Dragon*, *The Pope of Greenwich Village*, *Rumblefish*) never took off more than his shirt in *9-1/2 Weeks*, yet that tale of sexual obsession was considered so steamy that scenes were edited out for the movie's theatrical run. Rourke's newest film, *Angel Heart*, also had to be cut to avoid an

"X" rating. Why? It seems the censors got overly excited at a lovemaking scene between Rourke and *Cosby* kid Lisa Bonet. Actually, the scene in question contains no frontal nudity or explicit sex, but rather "artistic innuendo," according to director Alan Parker. No word yet if the IVE video release will restore the deleted footage.

Alan Parker's controversial 'Angel Heart.'

Tina Turner's Traffic Jam

When Tina Turner headed out to Indio, Calif. to shoot the music video for "What You Get Is What You See," it made the front page of the local newspaper and drew hundreds of vehicles to the roadside market on Highway 86, blocking traffic for miles. The crew stayed at the Best Western Date Tree Motel, while Turner and her entourage commuted from the Palm Springs Hilton. Was the R&B/rock queen a prima donna? She prudently took a

pass on stunts, but that's about all. "She came to work in complete make-up and wardrobe at all times and was always prompt," says an on-sight source involved with the costly (six-figure) music video clip. "She always gave a completely energetic performance. Between takes, she would stop for photographs and autographs." How did Turner look in real life, under harsh desert sun? "She looks *better* in person, absolutely phenomenal."

Take Your Turn With Jackie Stewart

Behind the Wheel with Jackie Stewart (Karl) gives video viewers the low-down on when to brake (going into the turn-by the time you reach the apex you should be accelerating again), how to corner with optimum gravity, and how to avoid making people carsick when you're behind the wheel. Driving around the Sears Point International Raceway with the three-time World Formula 1 Champion-

to listen to me."

And why not? As he reminded us while flooring it around the track, he didn't spill a single drop of blood during his hectic 12-year racing career. Since retiring from racing ("I burned out; I'd been doing the same thing since I was 23"), Stewart has become a television sports commentator, a Ford (sponsors of his videocassette) engineering consultant, member of the board of directors for



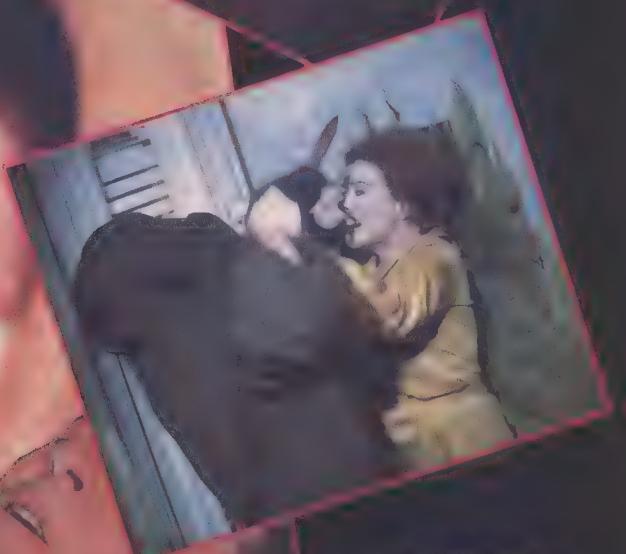
Jackie Stewart flashes a winning smile.

ship Grand Prix race driver at 115 mph, though, we had little time to contemplate the subtleties of his "formula finesse" technique. Later, over lunch, the energetic 48-year old explained why he is sharing his techniques on home video. "I saw the opportunity to improve driving. I think people are prepared

Moet et Chandon champagne and Rolex watches, and owner of the Gleneagles resort in Scotland. The multi-millionaire—who has nine VCRs in his Geneva home—says Porsches and Mercedes are "probably the best engineered cars" but that America now builds cars as well as or better than Japan.

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so grotesque you'll scream
out loud!

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Written By GIL LASKY and A. LASKY

THE NIGHT GOD SCREAMED

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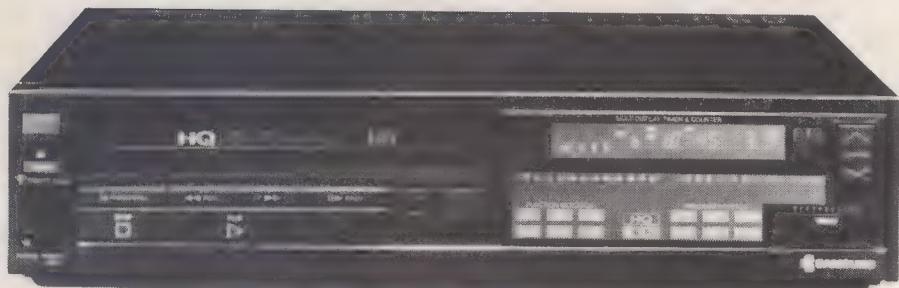
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New Products

Edited By Louis Kesten



Samsung's VR6600F VHS HQ VCR

Samsung Shows Its First Hi-Fi Stereo VCR

The new VR6600F VHS HQ VCR is Samsung's first to offer hi-fi stereo audio recording and playback along with an MTS decoder. The two-head machine has 14-day/6-event programming and 110-channel, cable-compatible, frequency synthesis tuning. Other features include

auto still release, auto rewind, picture search in SP, LP, and EP, and one-touch recording. The remote operates direct-access and channel up/down tuning.

Price: \$650.

For additional information,
circle no. 150 on Reader Service Card.



Chinon's Pocket 8 camcorder

Chinon Camcorder Shows Selective Autofocus

Chinon's second U.S. camcorder is an 8mm model weighing only 3.3 pounds with battery. The C8-C60 Pocket 8 features selective triple-stage autofocus that allows the user to focus on small or moving objects within the focal zone. A focal zone indicator frame flashes if the subject inside the frame is not in focus. The Pocket 8's f/1.2 lens zooms from 9 mm to 54 and has macro capability and low light sensitivity down to 7 lux.

The 2/3-inch black & white viewfinder has displays for recording, battery, light

level, white balance, and the focus zone. Editing features include an insert edit function and automatic fade. The Pocket 8 also features 4-second scene review, dual microphone pickups, and one-touch autofocus when in manual focus. Accessories include a one-hour battery, an AC adapter, an A/V connector, a VHF connector, an earphone, and a shoulder strap.

Price: \$1,895.

For additional information,
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Hitachi's CT-1365 13-inch TV



Hitachi's CT-2066 20-inch TV

Hitachi Offers New 20- and 13-Inch TVs

Hitachi's CT-2066 20-inch TV features random access electronic tuning from a wireless remote, onscreen displays for last channel, channel, and volume, an off timer, a tinted picture tube and jacks for MTS and audio and video inputs. The model CT-2065 shares the same features except for the jacks.

The CT-1365 13-inch TV features a 12-function remote, electronic tuning, onscreen channel and volume displays, an off timer and an earphone.

Prices: CT-2066, \$599; CT-2065, \$549; CT-1365, \$429.

For additional information,
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New Products



**Samsung's 20-inch
TC2023S TV**

Samsung's First Stereo TV

Samsung's 20-inch TC2023S TV features an MTS/SAP decoder, a stereo amplifier, and two front-mounted speakers. A stereo audio output allows connection to external speakers, and stereo headphones can be connected to a jack on the front of the set. The TV has 139-channel, cable-compatible frequency-synthesis tuning, with a high-contrast

square-cornered tube and comb filter to reduce picture distortion. Other features include onscreen channel and time displays, a wireless remote with programmable skip memory, picture sharpness control, and two audio/video inputs.

Price: \$500.

For additional information, circle no. 153 on Reader Service Card.



Media Optics' Steady Ready Cam

Camcorder Platform From Media Optics

Media Optics' Steady Ready Cam is a platform for video cameras and camcorders with left-side or rear viewfinders. The platform wraps around the upper arm, providing smooth camera control for walking or moving shots. Arm pressure on the bottom of the Steady Ready Cam even allows you to let go of the camcorder. The platform weighs only 12 ounces and is available from Media Optics, Box 3174, Burbank, CA 91504.

Price: not available.

For additional information, circle no. 154 on Reader Service Card.

Onkyo Remote Unifies Audio and Video

Onkyo's Unifier RC-AV1 universal programmable remote can take the place of a dozen different remotes. According to Onkyo, the Unifier can learn the control codes from any infrared remote for any audio or video product from any manufacturer. More than 100 functions can be stored in the Unifier's memory.

A user can program the infrared codes from any remote into the Unifier by pointing the units at each other and pressing matching buttons on the Unifier and the other remote. The Unifier signals when it has learned the new codes. It operates in three modes: audio, video, and auxiliary (for IR-controlled items like equalizers, processors, and home

security systems).

Price: \$120.

For additional information, circle no. 155 on Reader Service Card.



Onkyo's Unifier RC-AV1 programmable remote

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RCA has introduced its new generation of VHS-C video accessories for the handy new RCA Small Wonder camcorder (CPR100). Compact and lightweight, each provides an exciting new dimension to make your home videos even more professional. So get in on the start of something big by visiting your nearest RCA video dealer. Or to learn more, write: RCA Distributor and Special Products Division, Deptford, NJ 08096-2088. Attn: Sales Promotion Services.

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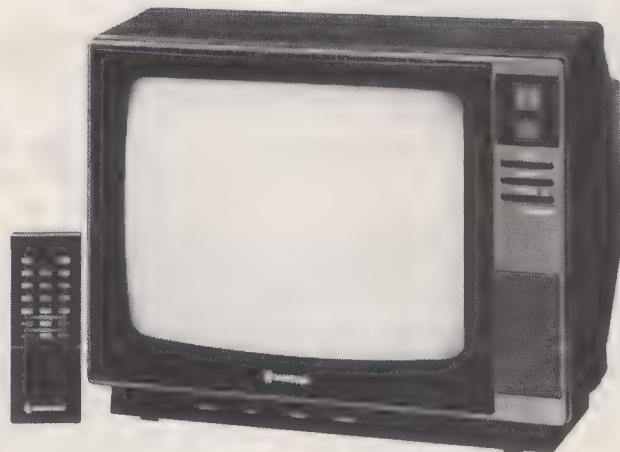
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New Products —



Samsung's 13-inch
TC3323V TV

13-Inch TV Due From Samsung

Samsung's new 13-inch TC3323V TV features a high-contrast picture tube with 62-channel, frequency synthesis tuning. The wireless remote controls channel and volume, and an LED display

indicates the channel. The set is housed in a simulated woodgrain cabinet.

Price: \$250.

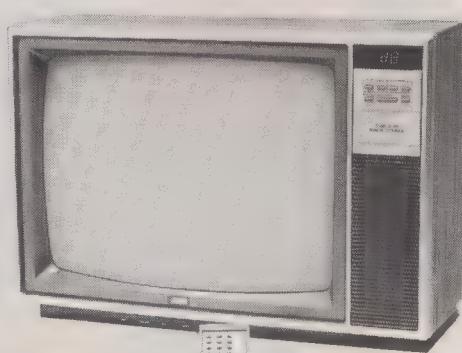
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AOC International Introduces 19-Inch TV

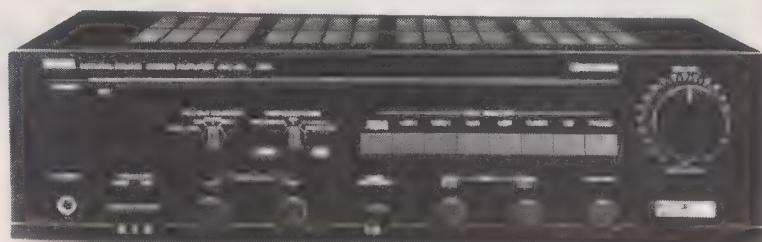
AOC's C9192 19-inch TV features a Hibron high-color density picture tube with 105-channel cable-compatible tuning. The set has a 64-step audio control for continuous volume adjustment, along with an LED channel indicator. The remote allows either random access or sequential search tuning. The C9192 is housed in a simulated woodgrain plastic cabinet with rounded corners.

Price: \$259.

For additional information,
circle no. 157 on Reader Service Card.



AOC's C9192 19-inch TV



Yamaha's AVC-30U audio/video control amplifier

Yamaha Amplifier Adds Surround Sound

Yamaha's updated audio/video control amplifier, the AVC-30U, combines a versatile switcher with three kinds of surround sound processing. The amp ties in up to three video inputs with eight audio inputs for any combination in playback and recording. It also serves as the control center for Yamaha's RS remote system, allowing the operation of many different Yamaha components from a single

remote control.

The AVC-30U has a 100-watt-per-channel front amplifier and a 20-watt per-channel rear amplifier. Its three-mode surround sound processor provides Dolby Surround, Yamaha Natural Surround, and Simulated Surround.

Price: \$429.

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New Products



Sharp's 13-inch 13MM67 TV

Sharp TVs Offer Curves and Colors

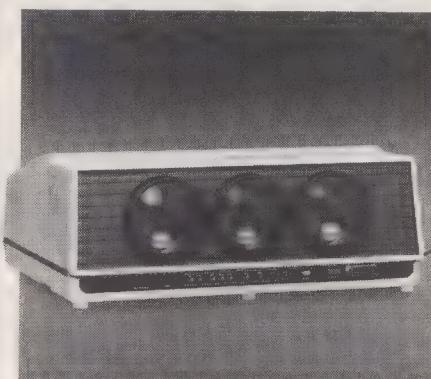
Sharp's new 9- and 13-inch TVs feature rounded corners and soft "decorator" shades. The 9-inch 9MS37 has a tinted, high-contrast Linytron Plus picture tube and is housed in a black, red or silver cabinet. Other highlights include 68-channel electronic tuning, onscreen channel display, audio/video input jacks, a mini headphone jack and a car battery cord.

The 13-inch 13MM67 comes in pink,

yellow, green, beige, white and black, and has a color-coordinated random access remote control. It features PLL quartz-synthesized electronic tuning, an LED channel indicator, and auto color. Detachable VHF and UHF antennas are included.

Prices: 9MS37, \$370; 13MM67, not available.

For additional information, circle no. 159 on Reader Service Card.



Pulsar Video's VP2020 projection TV

Pulsar Introduces Front and Rear TV

Pulsar Video's VPM-2020 projection TV can deliver a front- or rear-projection picture from 4 to 25 feet across on a flat or curved screen with floor or ceiling mounts. The projector weighs only 55 pounds, measures 3.2 cubic feet, and mounts on the floor or ceiling. It uses three liquid-cooled high-brightness tubes and two full-range loudspeakers with power amplifiers and audio inputs. The projector accepts NTSC or RGB inputs and adjusts for PAL and SECAM operation. Other options include a wired remote control and RGB circuitry.

Price: \$4,500.

RCA Introduces Slim 20-Inch TVs

RCA's new line of 20-inch TVs features slimmer picture tubes, allowing the sets to be placed on bookshelves in other tight spaces. All three sets feature ColorTrak auto color, MTS stereo sound, 147-channel cable-compatible tuning, and a 31-button remote that controls both the TV and a VCR. The FPR555 has dual speakers, while the FPR560 adds top-of-the-set tuning and a 10-jack monitor panel. The FPR570 has tuning controls on the bottom, along with dual side-mounted speakers.

Prices: Not available.

For additional information, circle no. 161 on Reader Service Card.



RCA's FPR560ER 20-inch TV

For additional information, circle no. 160 on Reader Service Card.



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For additional information, circle no. 73 or Reader Service Card.

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Fine Tuning

Your Video Questions Answered

Dubbing Dilemma

Q I bought Sony's CCD-EV-C8U Handycam and EV-C8U recorder/player, then purchased its CCD-V8AF camcorder. Since none of these machines has an audio dub control, I bought Sony's EV-S700 table-model 8mm deck and spent hours dubbing voices, sound effects, and music onto tapes of my 8mm movies. When I played back the tapes on the CCD-V8AF and the EV-C8U, I could only hear the old audio instead of the new audio that I dubbed in. Since I prefer to use the camcorder as a player, rather than the table-model, is there a solution to this problem, other than re-recording the tape?

John Brennan
New York, N.Y.

A Unfortunately, there is no absolute solution. Both the Handycam and CCD-V8 record only monaural sound combined directly with the video signal. This audio remains on the tape forever, as part of the original video signal. The only way you can add to or eliminate the original audio is to record new video as well.

When you use the audio dub feature of an 8mm VCR, such as the EV-S700, the new audio is placed on a special "reserve" track that was left open when the tape was originally made. But to hear it, you need a VCR that can read the information and play it back. Neither the EV-C8U or the CCD-V8AF can do this, which is why all you're hearing is the original audio.

The stereo audio you carefully dubbed is still there, but you won't be able to hear it unless you have a VCR like the EV-S700 (or any other stereo 8mm VCR).

Index Transfer

Q I'm considering changing from Beta to VHS, but I'm concerned about the auto indexing system used in VHS machines. I've heard that once the tape is removed from the VCR the indexing is lost. If this is true, will the system change in the future?

Scott L. Crouse
Minneapolis, Minn.

A Despite what you've heard VHS indexing isn't always lost when that tape is removed from a VCR. Different brands from the same original manufacturer, such as Panasonic and Quasar (both made by Matsushita) and JVC and Zenith (both by JVC), share indexing compatibility. There is even some index signal compatibility across brand-name lines. Hitachi's signals, for example, can be detected by the newest Matsushita machines.

JVC recently announced its CTL coding method, which offers sophisticated indexing abilities that go far beyond simply locating the start of a new program. VCRs with CTL can transfer or erase indexing codes from any VHS tape, enabling selected programs or scenes to be located automatically when the tape is played back. The CTL system is expected to be available on the next generation of deluxe VHS VCRs.

VCR Run Amok

Q I have a JVC HRS-100 portable VHS VCR. It's worked well for more than a year, but lately, when playing or recording at either speed, the tape suddenly jumps into fast forward and won't stop. This doesn't happen so often, but enough that I can't trust it any more. Shortly before the trouble started, I cleaned the heads for the first time. Could that have caused the problem?

Bal Sankpal
Rochester Hills, Mich.

A There are a number of possible causes, including a faulty electronic circuit or incorrect tape tension inside the VCR. It's even possible the head cleaning contributed to the latter problem, since most head cleaners (especially the wet variety) use tapes that are much thicker than actual videotape. Whatever the cause, the machine should be taken in for repairs.

NTSC Barriers?

Q I bought a Kyocera KD-2010 8mm camcorder in Hong Kong. It uses the NTSC format, but the instruction manual is in Japanese. Is there any difference between Japanese NTSC and NTSC as used in North America?

S. Tran
Yellowknife, Canada

A There's no difference between Japanese NTSC and ours. The frequencies the Japanese use for TV transmission vary, and so does the AC voltage, but the video system is the same. If

an AC adapter came with your unit, it's probably designed for 100 volts, instead of the 120 volts we use. You can use it with the higher voltages here, but it's not recommended. You can obtain a 120-volt adapter for your Kyocera (which is the same as the Minolta CR-8000 or the Pentax PV-C800 camcorders) from a dealer who distributes any of these brands over here.

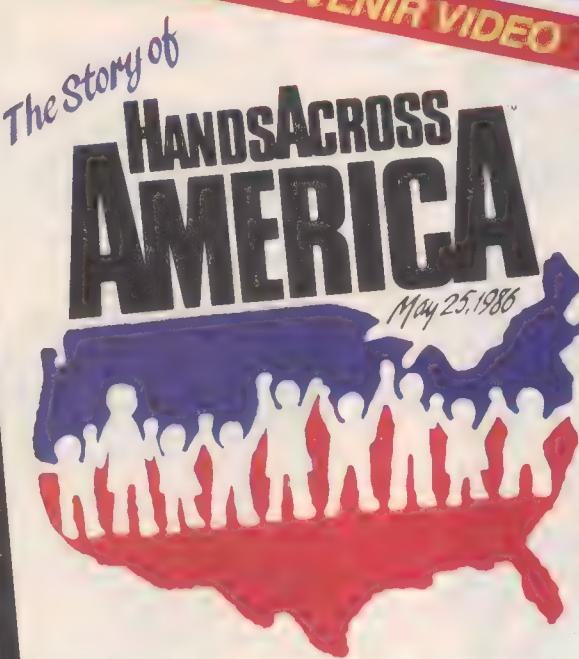
Static Edits

Q I have a J.C. Penney 5061 two-head VCR. When I record a black & white movie, I edit out the commercials with the pause button. But on playback, the points where I cut the commercials have static lines. Sometimes, if I wind the tape back a little bit, then go into the record mode, there's less distortion. But this doesn't work at all with color movies. They have static lines and distortion regardless of what I do.

Paul Retchart
Three Forks, Mont.

A When black & white movies are telecast, the TV station doing the broadcast is supposed to turn off the color part of the signal (called the colorburst) immediately after the commercials. Sometimes the station misses the mark, resulting in either color tinting of what was supposed to be a black & white movie or a colored glitch on the tape right after the return to the film.

A second source of static is the pause button itself. Whenever you start and stop



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Fine Tuning

the tape, some form of video distortion results. The amount depends on the equipment you're using. The flying-erase heads on some recent VCRs give perfect edits when you stop and start the tape. Both problems can be eliminated with the right equipment. A processing amplifier can get rid of stray colorbursts on black & white movies in case the TV station forgets. As for perfect edits, you'll have to get yourself a more advanced machine.

Double Hook-Up

Q Is it possible to hook up two VCRs to one TV? I have a Magnavox VHS and a Sanyo Beta.

Melvin L. Williams
Chicago, Ill.

A Go to any large video store or Radio Shack and buy an A/B switch. It has three threaded sockets, either in a t-shaped pattern or in a row. Connect the middle socket to the back of your TV (you'll need some short lengths of coaxial cable, which Radio Shack also carries) and the other two to the VHF output of each VCR. When you want to watch a tape from the VHS deck, flip the switch to the A side, and when you want to watch the Beta, flip to the B side. For convenience, mount the switch with two-sided tape near the front of your VCR shelf. The switch, cables, and tape should not cost more than about \$10.

Slow Motion

Q I use PD Magnetics tapes from West Germany because they can get 6-1/2 hours of programming at the EP speed. The only problem is they take twenty minutes to rewind, compared to about five for regular T-120s. Now, I'm afraid to use them anymore for fear of burning out the motor in my VCR. Is there something wrong with my VCR or is it faulty tape design?

M.T. James
Torrain, Ohio

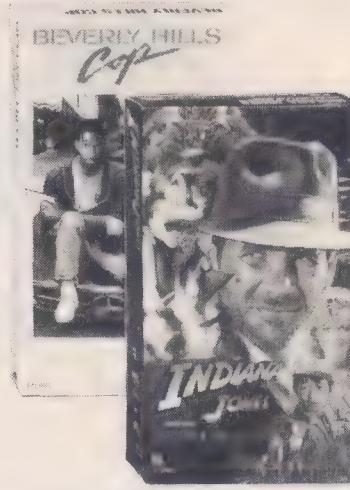
A Although the length of VHS cassettes sold in Europe is slightly different from U.S. versions (Europe's E-180, for example, delivers about 130 minutes compared to our T-120), there are no physical differences in the construction of the shells. Normally, the rewind time of a cassette is determined by the design of the VCR or a rewinder. Since you don't report problems with other cassette brands, the problem may be with this particular brand.

VIDEO welcomes your questions. Please do not enclose self-addressed envelopes as the volume of mail does not allow personal replies. Questions may be edited for clarity and space. Address letters to **Fine Tuning, VIDEO Magazine, 460 West 34th St., New York, N.Y. 10001.**

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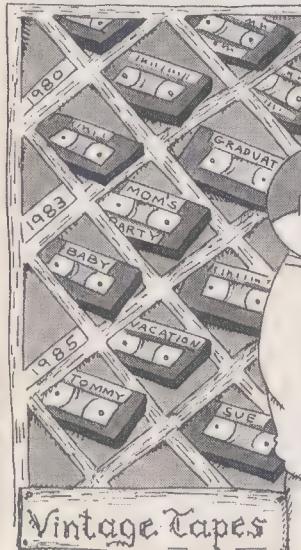
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by Roderick Woodcock

ILLUSTRATION BY KEN KRUG



How long can a video collection last? Ten years, 20 years, 50? Will those recent tapes of the baby's first steps still be viewable when baby reaches retirement age? Or will the growing collection of video family albums end up like old snapshots in a musty photo album—yellowed and creased with age? No one really knows how long videotape can last, or how many playbacks it can endure. But

there are a few simple steps you can take to make your videotape collection last longer. Most merely require applying a healthy dose of common sense.

Regardless of the format you prefer, it pays to take care of your tapes. Videotape, after all, is a fragile medium. It's really nothing more than a ribbon of polyester painted with metal oxide (pure metal particles in the case of 8mm). An adhesive called a binder holds the coating in place. The thickness of the tape ranges from about 20 microns for L-500 and T-120 tapes down to a scant 10 microns for the new P6-120 8mm tape.

With such dimensions, it's easy to see why videotape can easily be crushed, wrinkled, ripped, torn, stretched or melted. The plastic shell of the videocassette is designed to protect the tape inside. Still, you should be aware of the basics of careful cassette storage and handling.

Experts agree that opti-

mum storage temperature for videotape is 68 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, with a relative humidity of about 50 percent. The first rule of thumb is to avoid extremes of hot and cold. But prolonged exposure to heat will cause more damage to the recorded signals than extreme cold.

A tape that's been left in a hot car for several hours can congeal into gunk. High temperatures have even been known to alter the molecular composition of the binding chemical, causing it to flake off the tape in chunks.

A chilled tape can be recovered through slow warming and drying. Never try to play a tape that isn't completely thawed or insert a warm tape into a cold VCR. This will almost certainly destroy the tape and damage the VCR's heads.

The very pliability of videotape can create problems. If a tape shrinks or expands between the time it is recorded and the time it's played back, the difference in angle of the magnetic tracks on its surface make it difficult for the playback VCR to lock onto the signal. Newer TVs often correct for minor differences. But older TVs don't fare as well, and some videotapes play back pictures that wave or bend at the top of the screen. A picture that hooks to the right indicates that the tape may have shrunk slightly, shortening the tracks on the tape. A bend to the left is a sign of slight lengthening.

Old or worn VCRs can cause similar problems when the tension applied to the tape by the machines' internal guides is no longer cor-

rect. Tapes that play back poorly on other machines are said to have poor interchangeability, a problem compounded by slow tape speeds with narrow video track widths.

The other half of the tape preservation equation is cleanliness. If you smoke in the room where you use and store your VCR and tapes, you'll severely limit the life span of the tape collection. Store your tapes in air-tight plastic boxes (the kind most rental stores use). The cardboard slipcases that come with most tapes sometimes shed bits of paper which cling to the tapes' shells. Tapes should be filed vertically in drawers or on shelves with the empty reel on top. This prevents tape sag and lowers the center of gravity of the cassette, reducing its chance of falling over.

Horizontal tape storage is okay for a short time. Eventually, though, gravity will move the tape pack toward the bottom reel flange, increasing the risk of edge damage. When placed in a VCR, such a tape may not thread properly or line up with the VCR's internal guides. Damage to the lower edge of the tape is especially harmful, since that's where the control track (the electronic synchronizing pulses needed by the VCR to ensure proper playback) is located.

For long-term storage, keep tapes wound to the end rather than at the beginning. Rewinding a tape before viewing repacks it on its reels so it will feed through the VCR properly. It's also a

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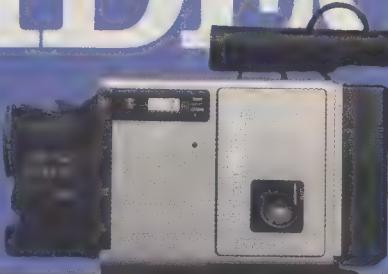
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good idea to "exercise" a tape every six months or so, whether you view it or not, by winding and rewinding it. Just be sure the tape rewinder you use can be trusted.

REWIND HAVOC

Automatic rewinders are convenient, but some cheap ones can be a hazard to videotape life. They can rewind too fast, breaking the leaders off the reel when rewinding suddenly stops at the end of the tape, or pack the tape too tightly.

Some of these rewinders were originally designed for regions where the current is 100 volts, rather than the 120V used in the U.S. These rewind faster than they were designed to. On other models, the reel tables aren't aligned as precisely as they are in a VCR, and rotate so unevenly that the tape pack they produce fills with ridges and valleys called "scatterwind."

Unless you can afford a good rewinder, use your VCR. Since that's the machine that will play back the tape, it will apply the proper winding torque. When rewinding, do so in a continuous, uninterrupted pass. Tapes should never be stored wound halfway. Nor should you leave a cassette inside a VCR too long, since this leaves tape exposed to airborne dust. It's best to fast-forward or rewind the tape completely from one reel or the other, then wind or rewind it again in one complete pass before putting it into long-term storage.

TAPE QUALITY

If you want your video library to last, use the highest quality tape you can afford. There's little reason to use cheap non-brand name tape now that regular grade brand name tape can be bought for about \$5 per cassette. Off-brand tape is a bad investment, since it's usually packaged in poorly made shells and often sheds oxide particles inside your VCR. The particles can prevent the video heads from making full contact with the tape, causing picture dropouts.

A bad tape can even carry oils and other contaminants into the normally pristine VCR. These can spread from the VCR to the next clean tape you happen to use. Rental tapes are especially suspect since there's no way of knowing the condition in which previous renters left the tapes.

Every time a videotape is played some of the magnetism that holds the signal on the tape is lost. Tapes that are recorded once and just played back thereafter tend to wear out faster than tapes that are recorded over and over.

Videotape is a medium that can be preserved for long periods of time. All it takes is a reasonable amount of cleanliness, care and common sense.



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The Camcorner

New Equipment & Shooting Tips

Shortcuts to Quality Edits

by Roderick Woodcock



ILLUSTRATION BY BARBARA FRIEDMAN

Shooting home movies has changed a lot since the '60s. One thing remains the same: whether you use 8mm videotape or Super 8 film, much of the footage you shoot probably isn't worth keeping. Unlike film, however, you can't manually cut videotape and splice it back together. Editing video tape must be done electronically by

time to copy and edit them. If it's worth taping with a camcorder, it's worth taping at the fastest speed.

Edit from the camcorder: Try to use the camcorder that did the recording to play back the tape you're editing. Playback capability is a standard feature with almost all newer machines. Use it whenever possible. Stresses

player to the recorder—as part of the editing process.

Use dual cables: Connect the player and the recorder with audio and video patch cords—twin cables that carry the sound and picture signals separately. Avoid using the single wire RF output provided with most camcorders. This hook-up is fine for casual tape viewing, but not for quality dubbing. By using the audio-video patch cord method, you'll leave the RF connector free for connecting to a TV. Ideally, you should have two sets: one for the player and one for the recorder. This enables you to locate and watch the exact scenes you want to dub from your master tapes, as well as screen the completed footage as it comes together on the recorder.

Best edits: A good indicator of the quality of your camcorder's edits is the amount of distortion at the point where you start and stop the tape between shots. Special circuits back up the tape slightly to overlap the end of the last shot with the beginning of the next one, minimizing any picture distortion and glitches that separate the two scenes.

reassembling the best scenes into a clearer and more concise version, then copying that onto another tape.

No matter which video format you're copying, the process takes its toll on second generation footage, which won't be as sharp as the original. But, if you observe a few rules, home tapes still can be very good. Here are some pointers to help you keep the zip in your edits:

Only the best: Use the highest quality tape, shot at the fastest speed your camcorder offers. Don't sacrifice video quality for tape economy by recording at a slower speed. EP tapes deliver poorer quality audio, and don't always track as well as faster speed tapes when it's

placed on the tape during recording may appear later if the tape is played back on a different VCR.

To make camcorders as compact as possible, manufacturers have miniaturized tape transports. Unfortunately, this has introduced some vertical picture distortion, especially when the tape is played back on a different deck.

There's one unavoidable exception. You'll have to switch to a VCR to exploit the special-effect capabilities of table-top machines. Many of the newer digital-effect VCRs can accomplish these tricks cleanly and add such enhancements as mosaic, polarization, and multiple images. All these effects can be copied—generated from the

A new technology that eliminates such distortion is the rotary or "flying" erase head. The head is mounted on the rotating video drum so it can erase the old video signal with frame-by-frame precision. So far it's only available on a few 8mm camcorders, Sony's SL-HF1000 Beta VCR, and Panasonic's AG-1950 VHS VCR.

In their absence, try to assemble your shot sequences as quickly as possible, keeping your recorder in the re-

The Beatles

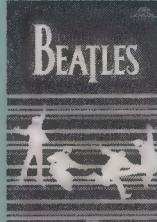
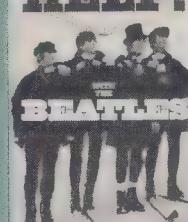
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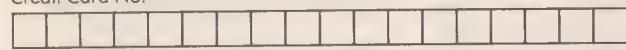
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cord/pause mode while you locate and cue up the next segment you intend to copy. This may be difficult, since most VCRs automatically release the record/pause mode after five to eight minutes. But five minutes should be plenty if you've organized your editing plan ahead of time by drawing a small storyboard of the shots, and their sequence and location on the master tape. Never stop the tape on the recorder and then go back into record to resume editing. As soon as the tape unthreads, you've lost the accuracy of the backspace editing circuitry and you'll end up with a ragged looking edit.

Another source of ragged edits occurs when you add a new segment that overlaps with the tail end of the old segment. This small section of old, unerased video is covered by the new video because it takes a little while for the VCR's full-erase head to take effect. It is sometimes called a crash edit and results in an ugly glitch, filled with rainbow-colored stains and video moire.

Stick to assemble edits: Make all of your edits using the so-called "assemble" technique, with the beginning of each segment tacked on to the tail of the preceding segment, one right after the other.

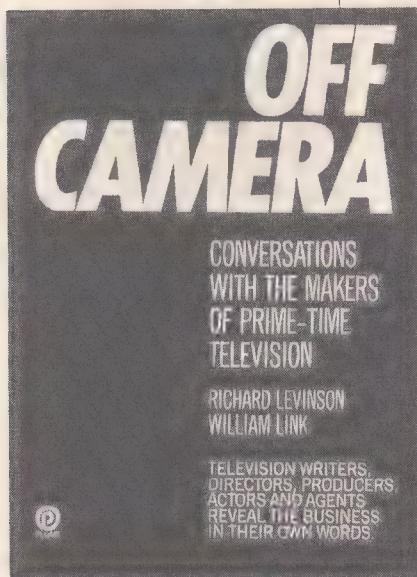
What happens if you discover later that you've left out a scene, or if you want to go back and change one segment for another? Now you're talking about "insert" edits, which is a different, more complicated ball game. Unless you have machines equipped with flying erase heads, or a VCR that has a video dub or video insert mode, try to avoid this kind of fix. While the beginning of your edit may look tolerable (though marred by rainbow-colored moire), there's no easy way to cover up the ugly blast of video noise a conventional VCR creates at the end of any new recorded segment.

Some VCRs that don't have flying erase heads have a feature called "video dub" that enables them to achieve frame-accurate edits by turning off the full-erase head and recording a higher than normal video signal in the insert mode. The effectiveness of this technique varies from model to model. On Hitachi's VT-89A and RCA's VKT-700, for example, you can't video dub over the same segment more than once.

You can begin to edit tapes with a minimum of one camcorder and one VCR or two VCRs, a set of patch cords, and two TVs. Take the time to locate, log, time, and index the various scenes from your master tapes and decide the order you want them to appear in your finished versions. The best editing equipment is still your own organizational skill.

Video Bookshelf

by Louis Kesten



Off Camera

by Richard Levinson and William Link
Plume, N.Y., \$8.95.

Those of us fascinated by television often have to answer those who regard the medium as a "vast wasteland." Even hardcore fans who never miss an episode of *Dynasty* or *Knots Landing*, dismiss TV in general as bad. But, of course, there is such a thing as quality television, and we would like to see more of it. Why aren't there more shows like *Cheers* or *The Equalizer*? Yet if we feel guilty about watching TV, imagine the soul-searching the people responsible for some of this stuff must undertake.

Richard Levinson and William Link, who created such series as *Columbo* and *Murder, She Wrote* and have written dozens of TV movies, wonder about this too. In 1981 they wrote *Stay Tuned*, enlightening memoir of their careers in television. *Off Camera: Conversations With the Makers of Prime Time Television* is a kind of sequel. In *Off Camera*, Levinson and Link interview 14 men and women who produce, direct, and otherwise shape network series, miniseries, and movies. Only a few of the names are familiar—Angela Lansbury, Aaron Spelling, Brandon Tartikoff—but they all create work that's seen each week by more people than saw *Rambo*.

Television, say the authors, lacks the glamour of movies because its creators don't have the luxury of

speculating about how to improve it. "Their concerns are immediate and parochial: meeting air dates; selling a series; coping with malevolent weather on location sites; grappling with escalating costs; and—always—coming up with ideas. In an environment that is far from ideal, excellence is rarely a priority."

Most of the interviewees dwell on the difficulty of producing consistent, quality programming in a rigid system scattered with roadblocks—Nielsen ratings, censors, advertisers, network interference and, most of all, time. Director David Greene (*Rich Man, Poor Man, Roots*) points out that working on a miniseries is like making six feature films in the time it usually takes to make one. Karen Arthur (*Cagney and Lacey*) directs one episode while editing and scoring the previous one, and planning and casting the next. "But all the skill in the world," Arthur admits, "isn't much good if you never allow yourself to stop, get off the treadmill, and take a breath."

Despite the obstacles, *Off Camera*'s subjects have good reasons for continuing to work in this demanding profession. There's money, of course, but they're all also convinced that they can overcome the obstacles and inertia that threaten their muse. They may confess to frequent hackwork, but they're justifiably proud of projects, such as *The Day After* and *Fatal Vision*, that demand more commitment and have greater impact. If everyone from network presidents to writer's agents can hold on to even a small glimmer of idealism, maybe someday

there'll be something worth watching on TV every night.

Made in Japan

by Akio Morita with Edwin M. Reingold and Mitsuko Shimomura
Dutton, N.Y., \$18.95.

The hottest trend in book publishing today has countless business bigwigs pontificating on how their companies are more inspired and innovative than the competition. This book by Akio Morita, the big sushi behind Sony, is cut from the same mold, but offers absorbing cultural detail that should interest even those who don't know the difference between a CEO and a COO. Best of all are Morita's discussion of how Japan's history of adversity led to its technological triumphs, and an intriguing discussion of wonders we may see in the future from Sony. If you loved 8mm, get ready for "high-resolution plasma displays."

Crackpot

by John Waters
Macmillan, N.Y., \$14.95.

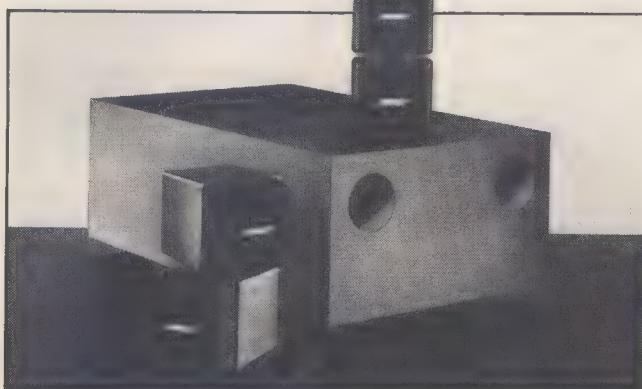
The second book by trash auteur John Waters (*Pink Flamingos*) is a collection of essays, mainly on dubious cultural icons like Pia Zadora, Godard's *Hail Mary*, and Lana Turner's hairdresser. Many of Waters' obsessions are too slight to merit such lavish attention, but his droll humor helps communicate his enthusiasm. The heart of *Crackpot* is a report of Waters' stint teaching a film course to murderers and rapists in a Maryland prison. Their response to Waters' "celluloid atrocities" leads to a thought-provoking analysis of the true functions of sex and violence in movies. 

Audio Input

The Sound Side of Video

Shape of Gear to Come

by Ivan Berger



The Bose AM-5 satellite/subwoofer speaker system

In recent months we've seen a truckload of interesting new audio products aimed at videophiles and video products aimed at audiophiles. This month we'll look at some of the amplifiers, receivers, stereo decoders, and other audio equipment now available to enhance the pleasures of video.

Pioneer is producing more digital-sound LaserDiscs as well as a new LaserVision player, the LD-83D, that offers digital sound at a moderate (\$550) price. The audio section uses a digital filter that samples at twice the normal rate for cleaner sound. The remote control can select digital or analog sound, and switch the analog section's CX noise reduction on and off, as well as handle all the video functions.

AMPLIFIERS

As video sound improves, audiophiles are integrating their audio and video equipment. Preamplifiers with vid-

eo inputs and remote controls have appeared, including Pioneer's C-90, Sansui's C-1000, and Kenwood's KC-105. The Pioneer is oriented more toward audio purists, with such features as a motor-driven volume control instead of an electronic one. The Sansui also has a motorized volume control, as well as a delay-line video enhancer. The Kenwood incorporates a seven-band equalizer, but requires a separate system remote-controller (Model RC-95). All these preamps also require either a power amplifier or self-powered speakers.

Luxman's new LV-109 A/V integrated amplifier, for \$1,500, has video inputs and outputs, but the LE-109 phono preamp costs an extra \$500. The LV-109's main distinction is its digital-to-analog converter, which can accept digital signals directly from CD players, DAT recorders, and satellite receivers with direct digital outputs. (Kenwood has a similar amp, with fiber-optic digital inputs, but it has no video features.) Nikko's NA-1050 amp, for \$399, has a mixer for both audio and video.

A/V RECEIVERS

Kenwood and Pioneer have also announced new audio/video receivers whose displays can be programmed to show the call letters, instead of just the frequencies, of the FM and AM stations stored in the tuners' preset memo-

ries. Kenwood's KR-V55R and KR-V45 A/V receivers have 12-station memories (24-station, if you don't use the call-letter feature), five-band audio equalizers, and synthesized stereo for mono videotapes or TV programs.

Pioneer's VSX-5000 A/V receiver has a 20-station memory, Dolby Surround sound, and simulated stereo, as well as four video inputs, separate antenna inputs for off-the-air and cable FM, a video enhancer with a split-screen function, and a sleep timer. Pioneer's VSX-4000 is similar, but with 60 watts instead of 100 per channel, a matrix surround system, and only three video inputs.

Nikko, however, calls such A/V receivers "little more than audio receivers with video plugs added." To prove its point, Nikko has brought out the AVR-65, with a 139-channel cable-ready TV tuner, an MTS/SAP decoder, and AM and FM tuning sections. Connected to any TV or composite video monitor, the AVR-65 gives you an integrated stereo A/V system, cable-ready and stereo equipped, all operable by remote control.

MTS AND SAP

If MTS (multichannel television sound) and SAP (second audio program) are all you need to update your TV, several companies are offering solutions. Recoton's line of F.R.E.D. decoders now includes three models, all

Audio Input

with MTS, stereo synthesizers, and probes that pick up the sound from unmodified TVs. F.R.E.D.s I and II have dynamic noise reduction, II and III have SAP bilingual tracks and Channel 3/4 cable decoding, and F.R.E.D. III has a stereo amplifier. Gemini now has an MTS/SAP decoder, the ST8000, and MultiVision's 3.1 and 2.1 picture-in-picture adapters include MTS decoders, too.

SURROUND SOUND

Surround sound is now showing up in both A/V and audio-only rack systems from Yamaha, Pioneer, and others. NEC has introduced the AV-250, a \$299 Dolby surround sound processor with remote control and an amplifier. Aphex, Fosgate, and Synergex also have new surround systems; Synergex's \$675 Model ESP-7R requires six amplifier channels and six speakers. And Yamaha now has a six-channel master volume control, the \$149 MVS-1 for use with its DSP-1 and similar surround sound units. Luxman's F-105 combines Dolby surround with an input selector, time delay, and other goodies, all remote controllable.

Meanwhile, Peter Scheiber, the inventor of matrix surround, has signed a licensing agreement with Dolby Labs for logic-type decoding systems, and is working on an improved Dolby-compatible system that will have independent left and right-rear channels.

SPEAKERS

More and more speaker makers are coming out with "video-oriented" models, though the degree of orientation varies. For example, DCM's TimeFrame speakers are billed as audio/video models because good surround sound requires accurate spatial imaging, something DCM has long been known for. Fried Products' Beta speakers are unshielded, but are still among the best moderately priced (\$315 per pair) speakers around.

The new Pro III mini-speakers from JBL are shielded and self-powered (or "active"), like the AR Powered Partners and Bose RoomMates ("Audio Input," May '87). They, too, can be mounted in several ways, and they sell for \$240 per pair. Other new active minis include the D-Box B-55A, Recoton's V632 and V633, and Koss's M-60 Plus and M-100 Plus.

AR and Bose also have some new models. The Powered Partners are now available in a weatherproof version for outdoor or boat use. And Bose has a radical new speaker system that's perfect for people who think audio should be heard but not seen. The AM-5

The first VCR that can bring "As The World Turns" to an instant halt.



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"Wireless Wonders"

Video Magazine Sept. 1986

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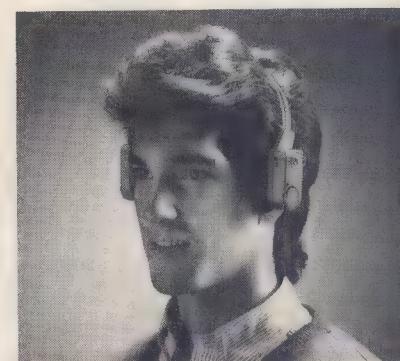
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Sony L750	3.65	Fuji T120 SHG	3.79
L500 UHG	4.49	Fuji T120	7.99
L750 UHG	4.69	Maxell T-120 EX	3.79
PRO L500	6.05	T-120 HGX	4.95
T-120	8.90	T-120 Gold	5.69
T-120 G	10.00	Scotch-EG	4.15
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AUDIO TAPE

UDS1-60	1.15	MX-60	2.10

<tbl_r cells="4"

Audio Input

Acoustimass system is a twist on an old idea: saving space by using small satellite speakers for middle and high frequencies, and a larger, easily hidden, subwoofer for the lows. The satellites are two four-inch cubes. The top cube rotates to adjust the stereo sound. The subwoofer (a spin-off from the Acoustic Wave system used in the Zenith/Bose TV) is also unusually small, about the size of a typewriter. Price of the system will be \$699.

WOOFERS

If you need a subwoofer for small speakers you already have, consider Trid's BassBase. In a cabinet sized to serve as a TV base, it holds a shielded subwoofer and a 70-watt amplifier/cross-

**Amplifiers,
speakers, and
receivers can
enhance the
video experience.**

over. A compartment can hold two more components (such as a VCR and an LV player or an A/V receiver). The same cloth that covers the speakers covers the components, and it's transparent enough to pass infrared remote-control beams and let you read the components' displays. The system costs \$260, and its woofer is rated as covering frequencies from 120 Hertz to 38 Hz.

To go down deeper takes a bigger woofer and more money, power, and space. For example, Velodyne's ULD-12 goes down almost an octave further, to 20 Hz. But it costs \$699, has a 250-watt amplifier, and is about twice the size of the BassBase's woofer (though only about two-thirds the size of the entire BassBase). The Velodyne also requires more expensive satellites with good response down to the woofer's top frequency of 85 Hz, not just the 120 Hz the BassBase requires.

HEADPHONES

Wire-Free has added a stereo cordless headset and a stereo transmitter/receiver (for use with headsets of your own) to its mono transmitter/receiver (see "Audio Input," Sept. '86). Koss, Nady, and Ambico have also introduced transmitter/receivers. 

Ivan Berger is technical editor of Audio Magazine.



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THE GREAT CAMCORDER SHOOTOUT OF 1987

Three Writers Field-Test Nine Camcorders

Having toyed long enough with the idea of buying a camcorder—its cost is no longer terrifying—you visit a dealer who carries machines in the major formats. Suddenly you're confused. The VHS camcorder's heavy, the picture from the light 8mm model jiggles when you play it back, while the Compact VHS tape only runs for 20 minutes at the fast speed. The exotic features you dreamed about now look frighteningly complicated—and the prices are all over the lot. Perhaps you should think this over a little more... Or perhaps read this article.

Because buying a camcorder can be even trickier than using one, VIDEO asked three writers to compare nine camcorders and report back.

We armed each contributor with camcorders representing each of the major home shooting formats: one VHS, one Compact VHS, and one 8mm machine. They included the following models: in VHS, Hitachi's VM5000A, Panasonic's PV-300, and Zenith's VM7100; in Compact VHS, Magnavox's VR8297, RCA's CPR100, and Zenith's VM6200; and in 8mm, Canon's VM-E2, Minolta's CR8000AF, and Sony's CCD-V110.

The above nine comprise a representative cross-section of the types and variety of camcorders local dealers are likely to carry. Of the more than five dozen additional models you may encounter (see accompanying charts) virtually all are variations on the samples in our shootout. All contributors were asked to shoot

and play back three tapes to test each camcorder's ability to handle indoor and outdoor environments, low-light situations, and moving and stationary objects. Here's what they found.

TAKE ONE

VHS: Panasonic PV-300
Compact VHS: Zenith
VM-6200
8mm: Sony CCD-V110

One sure-fire way to test a camcorder is to leave it around the house and see if anyone uses it. Never mind the fancy features; does the machine itself inspire frequent taping? Recently I had an opportunity to explore this premise with camcorders using all the leading tape formats. Though all have their strong points, the VHS machine delivered steadier images and the 8mm stood out technically. But the camcorder I found myself using the most was the Zenith, the smallest in the group and the easiest to carry around. The experience confirmed what I had long suspected: miniaturization is the camcorder's crowning glory.

The picture from the Sony CCD-V110 looked the best. Neither of the VHS versions approached the richness and faithfulness of its colors, its line definition or its low-light characteristics. The Compact Zenith yielded natural skin tones and realistic reds that looked impressive in SP mode. But the picture quality turned grainy and objectionable in EP. The Panasonic, in turn, was inconsistent, with its brilliant red, for example, frequently shifting to orange. A test with a



**By Steven Forbis, Ty Harrington
and Martin Porter**

Shootout

candle in a dark room gave the Sony a chance to show off its superior ability to handle low illumination.

The viewfinders proved a useful point of comparison. Although each model provides instant replay and on-screen indicators, the Sony had the clearest, most consistent viewfinder confirmations. The on-screen tape counter, also on the Panasonic, was especially welcome since it helped keep me aware of the length of the scenes I was shooting—and helped me keep them short. The Zenith's viewfinder also has on-screen displays, but not enough, and its eyepiece kept slipping off.

The controls on the three are similar. Each has autofocus, auto iris, and auto white balance. The Sony and the Panasonic

also have date/time character generators and complete tape playback capabilities. The Sony deck carries the most editing features—including switches for edits, insert edits, and frame advance—and the most manual overrides, an approach appreciated by those who take video shooting seriously. All the machines have a fade-out effect; the Sony adds a wipe. The Panasonic is the only one with audio dub.

Backlight compensation is standard, though none compensated as much as I would have liked. The Zenith and the Panasonic have color temperature switches that differentiate natural from artificial light, while Sony's outdoor/indoor transition was automatic, conveniently eliminating a frequent oversight during shooting.

Each machine had its own feel. The Panasonic, with its sturdy shoulder rest, felt the most secure, and permitted the most consistent scene composition and the steadiest images. It was also the easiest to figure out, with functional, evenly-spaced controls. It was disconcerting to find the record button atop the hand grip, but only at first. The PV-300's only drawback is its weight, which can cause shoulder pain after videotaping excursions. Sony's 8mm provided equally steady shots, thanks to its shoulder rest.

The Zenith handled the least fluidly. The topside viewfinder made me feel I was



Panasonic's sturdy, steady PV-300 VHS allows audio dubbing.



Zenith's light, easy-to-carry VM-6200 VHS-C yields natural colors.



Sony's CCD-V110 8mm boasts superior low light performance.

shooting with a box pressed to my face. I prefer the breathing room afforded by side-view models. The Zenith's viewfinder was constantly nudging aside, and never seemed to be in position when I needed it. Also, since it takes more practice than you might expect to maintain steady images with a light camera, you really need two hands to use the Zenith properly.

Despite these qualms, I found myself reaching most often for the Zenith. The Sony makes more sense for a videophile interested in having *everything*, not just light weight, while the Panasonic is packed with features but makes a heavy load for on-the-go shooting. The Zenith, though weaker than the others on certain features, had one undeniable advantage...it got used.

—M.P.

TAKE TWO

VHS: Hitachi VM-5000A

Compact VHS: RCA CPR 100

8mm: Minolta CR8000AF

All three camcorders performed amazingly well. They have numerous useful features and were so easy to operate that my 90-year-old grandfather could handle them all the first time he picked them up. Those who practice will find that such features as review and memory have an edit-as-you-go potential that can produce nearly professional results.

The Hitachi was the largest and heaviest, weighing about two pounds more than the others, which weigh three to four pounds. The Hitachi's size permits it to incorporate a padded contour in the base that rests squarely on the operator's right shoulder. This adds stability while lessening camera movement.

The more compact RCA and Minolta units are easier to carry and are far less obtrusive. However, they're less stable and, without the shoulder rest, more likely to be tiring when used for long periods. The Minolta holds the tape cassette vertically in a slim, well-balanced housing. A right-hand grip provides camera support

Featured Camcorders Compared

Brand	Model	Format	Price	Pickup	Minimum Illumination	Weight ¹	Dimensions ²	Tape Speeds
Canon	VM-E2	8mm	\$1,699	1/2" CCD	8 lux	4 lbs. ³	6 x 5.7 x 11.8	SP
Hitachi	VM5000A	VHS	\$1,695	2/3" MOS	7 lux	6.4 lbs.	7.5 x 6.5 x 14.1	SP
Magnavox	VR8297	VHS-C	\$1,899	1/2" CCD	7 lux	3.1 lbs. ⁴	6.25 x 5.25 x 10.25	SP/EP
Minolta	CR8000AF	8mm	\$2,165	2/3" MOS	7 lux	3.2 lbs. ⁴	5.4 x 4.9 x 12.7	SP record, SP/EP play
Panasonic	PV-300	VHS	\$2,000	1/2" CCD	7 lux	6.9 lbs.	8.7 x 14.9 x 4.6	SP
RCA	CPR100	VHS-C	\$1,399	2/3" MOS	10 lux	4 lbs.	6.25 x 4.6 x 8.6	SP/EP
Sony	CCD-V110	8mm	\$1,995	1/2" CCD	15 lux	5.8 lbs.	7.5 x 3.9 x 14.5	SP/EP
Zenith	VM6200	VHS-C	\$1,500 ³	1/2" CCD	15 lux	3.5 lbs.	6.6 x 4.8 x 8.8	SP/EP
Zenith	VM7100	VHS	\$1,795	1/2" CCD	8 lux	5.3 lbs. ⁴	8.5 x 5.6 x 13.5	SP/EP

1. With battery. 2. Height/width/length in inches. NA: Not available. 3. Approximately. 4. Weight without battery.

and easy access, for medium to large-sized hands, to the trigger and the zoom lens' control.

The Compact RCA houses the cassette horizontally in a shorter unit with a slightly less-well contoured hand grip near the back, a site that exaggerates the effect of hand movement and makes it harder to steady the lens while operating the controls. Carrying handles with the Minolta and the Hitachi provide grips for steadyng the units with the left hand.

The microphones are at the front right of each unit with jacks for an earphone and an external microphone. The Minolta also has a jack for an external microphone. All the microphones produced clearly audible sound and the automatic features worked well, except that both the Minolta and the RCA were occasionally confused by abrupt loud sounds followed by returns to lower average volumes; for example, the intrusion of a bass drum beat in a live band's performance. The Hitachi's microphone is 50 percent larger than the others and produced unquestionably superior sound. It even compensated well for loud intrusive noises. Tape hiss and extraneous noise pickup were minimal with all three.

However, the large-format Hitachi provided the clearest recording of the operator's voice because its left-mounted viewfinder permits an unobstructed path from mouth to microphone. The RCA also has an adjustable viewfinder that permits enough airspace in front of the mouth for the voice to carry clearly to the microphone. The Minolta's eyepiece, however, is fixed at the rear of the camera, forcing the face to press uncomfortably against the unit, distorting the operator's voice unless extra care is taken to speak clearly.

The RCA viewfinder was the most adjustable. Its ability to rotate at a right angle to the unit tailored it to tripod use. The Hitachi's viewfinder and eyepiece are also the largest, making them the easiest to use in bright daylight.

A problem common to virtually all



RCA's CPR 100 VHS-C produces bright color reproduction.



Hitachi's VM-5000A VHS uses a larger mic for superior audio.

camcorders is that, to keep weight down, they are encased in light plastic without enough reinforcement to assure durability. During routine use, the eyepiece on the Minolta brushed against a padded carrying case: one of the two tiny pegs that hold it in place broke off. The Hitachi is designed to stand upright and was stable that way—until I removed the battery for recharging. That left a higher center of gravity, especially with a light attached. As a result, it rolled onto its side and a hairline crack appeared in the autofocus cover. The crack

did not affect operation, but it indicates a somewhat fragile construction.

The Minolta and the RCA have more conveniently arranged controls than those on the larger Hitachi. Two exceptions are the Hitachi's manual iris and manual white balance controls. The manual iris control allows for quick compensation for adverse light situations and iris-controlled special effects such as lens flares and fade outs. The manual iris controls on the Minolta and the RCA did not operate smoothly while shooting, nor did the less important manual white balance on the Minolta. The RCA does not have a manual white balance.

All the units have rapid on/off triggers and smooth zoom lenses with a specified range of 11.5 to 69 mm. However, the wide angle on the Hitachi is actually several degrees wider, and thus more useful. All have a review feature, which automatically rewinds the tape a short distance and replays the most recent segment. Both the RCA and the Hitachi displayed long enough segments to facilitate editing. The shorter rewind on the Minolta is less useful. The switch to activate the review is most useful when it can be operated without taking the eye from the eyepiece. This was possible on both the RCA and the Minolta, but not on the Hitachi.

All three camcorders have infrared auto focus with manual override. They focused well automatically when zoomed from wide angle to telephoto, and even better from close-up telephoto to wide angle. The Hitachi's autofocus is slightly less stable than the others and has a tendency to make near-continuous adjustments, causing greater reliance on manual focusing. However, the larger Hitachi made stable manual focusing much easier.

The tapes I used were Maxell's HGX-160 for VHS, RCA's TC-20 for Compact VHS and TDK's MP P6-120 for 8mm. All the VCR components worked smoothly. The Hitachi and the Minolta VCR controls have indicator LEDs which the RCA lacks, making its VCR controls somewhat confus-

Max. Record Time	Lens Speed	Zoom Ratio	Special Features
120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto/man. focus, iris, white balance, fader; EVF; macro
160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris; auto/man. white balance; EVF; HQ
60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF, focal zone indicator; HQ
120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto focus, iris, white balance w/manual override; date generator; EVF
160 min.	f/1.2	8:1	auto focus, white balance, iris; HQ; macro
60 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto focus w/manual; auto white balance, iris, fader; EVF; HQ; macro
120 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto focus, white balance, iris; macro; EVF; titler; fade/wipe; date/time; insert edit
60 min.	f/1.6	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
8 hrs.	f/1.6	6:1	auto focus, iris, white balance; audio dub; backlight; EVF; HQ; hi-fi; stereo mic



Minolta's slim CR-8000S AF boasts excellent picture resolution.

ing. Picture resolution for all was very good, though the Minolta's looked superior.

Each format and unit has advantages and disadvantages. The Hitachi scored highly because of its superior audio performance and shoulder stability. The RCA and the Minolta, however, are more portable and let you feel less conspicuous without sacrificing video quality. In fact the Minolta demonstrated the best resolution of the three while the RCA displayed the best and brightest colors.

The inability of 8mm tape to be played in a VHS VCR is mitigated by the Minolta's high resolution (of course, it is easily viewed using the camcorder's VCR and a cable). Though the RCA has no counter memory or LEDs, it has the most adjustable viewfinder.

Unless you plan to own several camcorders, first select the format that suits you, then select the unit with the features tailored to your needs. As you can see, each format has its strengths.

—T.H.

TAKE THREE

VHS: Zenith VM7100

Compact VHS: Magnavox VR8297 Video Escort

8mm: Canon VM-E2

My three camcorders proved to be fantastic machines, color television studios you can tote with one hand. But they also have touchy, sometimes baffling controls, too much bulk, and pictures that can still be improved.

These machines use complementary CCD imagers, which means the signal starts out as a color negative that is reversed electronically. This gives them greater low light sensitivity, but at the expense of really accurate color. Non-existent colors often bloomed on bright

1987 Camcorder

Brand	Model	Price	Pickup	Minimum Illumination	Weight ¹
VHS					
Chinon	CV-T60	\$1,995	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Chinon	CV-T60G	\$1,895	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
GE	9-9606	\$1,500	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
GE	9-9608	\$1,599	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
GE	9-9610	\$1,799	CCD	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Goldstar	GVM-70AF	\$1,695	CCD	19 lux	6.2 lbs.
Hitachi	VM2100A	\$1,495	Saticon	7 lux	5.5 lbs.
Instant Replay	92 IT3	\$1,895	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Instant Replay	93 IT3	\$1,995	CCD	20 lux	5.6 lbs.
Instant Replay	660 IT3	\$1,995	Newvicon	10 lux	7.5 lbs.
Magnavox	VR8292AV	\$1,799	Newvicon	7 lux	6.9 lbs.
Magnavox	VR8293AV	\$1,899	CCD	7 lux	6.9 lbs.
Magnavox	VR8294	\$1,799	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Magnavox	VR8294AV	NA	Newvicon	7 lux	6.9 lbs.
Minolta	CR-1200S AF	\$2,085	MOS	7 lux	5.5 lbs.
Mitsubishi	HS-10UR	NA	Saticon	7 lux	NA
NEC	V-20U	\$1,695	CCD	10 lux	6 lbs.
NEC	V-30	\$1,859	CCD	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Olympus	VX-403	\$1,950	CCD	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Olympus	VX-404	NA	CCD	7 lux	5.3 lbs.
Panasonic	PV-210	\$1,500	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Panasonic	PV-220	\$1,100	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Pentax	PV-C55A	\$1,799	MOS	7 lux	5.5 lbs.
Philco	VCR801	\$1,749	Newvicon	7 lux	6.6 lbs.
Quasar	VM-11	\$1,650	Newvicon	7 lux	5.7 lbs.
Quasar	VM-20	\$1,800	CCD	7 lux	5.7 lbs.
RCA	CMR200	\$1,299	Saticon	7 lux	5.5 lbs.
RCA	CMR300	\$1,499	MOS	7 lux	5.5 lbs.
Sharp	VC-C10UA	\$1,900	Newvicon	10 lux	5.7 lbs.
Sharp	VC-C20UA	\$1,800	CCD	NA	5.3 lbs.
Sylvania	VCC151	\$1,749	Newvicon	7 lux	5.6 lbs.
Sylvania	VCC152	\$1,899	Newvicon	7 lux	NA

COMPACT VHS

GE	9-9710	\$1,699	CCD	7	3.7 lbs.
GE	9-9712	\$1,800	CCD	7	3 lbs.
Hitachi	VM-C50A	\$1,399	MOS	10	3.1 lbs.
JVC	GR-C7U	\$1,495	CCD	15	2.9 lbs.
JVC	GR-C9U	\$1,150	CCD	10	1.6 lbs.
Minolta	CR-3000S AF	\$1,667	Saticon	15	4.3 lbs.
Minolta	Series-C 3300	\$1,667	CCD	NA	3.6 lbs.
Panasonic	PV-100	\$1,600	CCD	7	3.1 lbs.
Quasar	VM-50AC	\$1,799	CCD	7	3.1 lbs.
Sharp	VC-C50UA	\$1,600	CCD	15	3.5 lbs.
Sylvania	VCC155	\$1,899	CCD	7	3.5 lbs.
Toshiba	SK60	NA	CCD	15	3 lbs.
Zenith	VM6150	NA	CCD	10	2.1 lbs.
Zenith	VM6200	\$1,500	CCD	15	2.9 lbs.

1. With battery. 2. Height/width/length in inches. NA: Not available.

Buyer's Guide

Dimensions ²	Tape Speeds	Max. Record Time	Lens Speed	Zoom Ratio	Special Features
8 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
8 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro; titler
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	8:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; HQ; macro
5 x 6 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; HQ; macro
NA	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
8 x 6 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF
8 x 6 x 12	SP	160 min.	NA	8:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF
8 x 6 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	8:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro; titler
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 8 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
NA	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
NA	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	8:1	auto: focus, white balance; backlight; EVF; HQ; macro
8 x 4 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	8:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 4 x 9	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; HQ; macro
8 x 6 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
8 x 6 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro; titler
NA	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro; titler
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	8:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro; titler
8 x 7 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
8 x 7 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
8 x 6 x 13	SP	160 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 5 x 14	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
9 x 5 x 15	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro; titler
NA	SP	160 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
6 x 5 x 10	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
6 x 5 x 10	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 5 x 9	SP/LP	60 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 5 x 9	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.6	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
4 x 4 x 8	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.6	—	auto: iris, white balance; HQ
5 x 5 x 13	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
5 x 4 x 9	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.6	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
6 x 5 x 10	SP/SLP	60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
9 x 5 x 10	SP/SLP	60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 4 x 9	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.6	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
6 x 5 x 10	SP/LP	60 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
7 x 5 x 9	SP/LP	60 min.	f/1.6	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro
4 x 4 x 8	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.6	—	auto: iris, white balance; HQ
7 x 5 x 9	SP/EP	60 min.	f/1.6	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; HQ; macro

1987 Camcorder



Zenith's VM-7100 VHS features a hi-fi stereo microphone.



Magnavox's VR8297 VHS-C uses a high-speed shutter.



Canon's VM-E2 8mm boasts a sensitive autofocus.

surfaces. Even so, the images were pleasing.

Tapes I made of the same scene in New York City's Central Park looked brightest and most colorful on the Magnavox. The Canon rendered a darker, slightly noisier picture that was probably the most accurate if not the most gratifying. The Zenith yielded a flatter, somewhat steely image.

Losses at the SP speed were minimal as was the loss suffered by the Canon 8mm tape when played on my Sony VCR, which, like all 8mm equipment, automatically adjusts tracking. Both the Magnavox and the Zenith lost a little quality in terms of noise and edge sharpness at the EP speed. The real toll came when I played back the EP VHS and Compact VHS tapes on my Zenith

Brand	Model	Price	Pickup	Minimum Illumination	Weight ¹
8MM					
Aiwa	CV-50	\$1,300	CCD	19	2.5 lbs.
Aiwa	CV-80	\$1,795	CCD	19	4.5 lbs.
Chinon	C8-C60	\$1,895	Newvicon	7	5.6 lbs.
Eastman Kodak	MVS-3440	\$1,500	Newvicon	10	4.2 lbs.
Eastman Kodak	MVS-5460	\$2,000	Newvicon	10	4.8 lbs.
Elmo	ECR-8	\$1,850	CCD	7	2.5 lbs.
Goldstar	GS-8AF	\$1,695	CCD	19	5 lbs.
Kyocera	KD-200	\$1,745	CCD	19	4.5 lbs.
Kyocera	KD-1100U	\$1,500	CCD	NA	3.8 lbs.
Kyocera	KD-2010U	\$1,795	CCD	7	3.5 lbs.
NEC	EM-A8U	\$1,695	CCD	7	5.1 lbs.
Nikon	VN-800	\$1,850	CCD	7	3 lbs.
Olympus	VX-801	\$1,850	CCD	7	2.8 lbs.
Pentax	PV-C800A	\$1,749	MOS	7	3.2 lbs.
Ricoh	R-250	\$1,495	CCD	9	3.8 lbs.
Sanyo	Vision 8	\$1,470	CCD	19	4.5 lbs.
Sony	CCD-V1	NA	CCD	11	3 lbs.
Sony	CCD-M7U	\$1,450	CCD	10	2.1 lbs.
Sony	CCD-M8U	NA	CCD	25	2.4 lbs.
Sony	CCD-M9U	\$1,350	CCD	15	3.1 lbs.
Sony	CCD-V3	\$1,500	CCD	16	3.8 lbs.
Sony	CCD-V8 AF	\$1,695	CCD	19	5.1 lbs.

SUPERBETA

Sony	BMC-660K	\$1,495	CCD	25	5.5 lbs.
Sony	BMC-1000K	\$1,799	CCD	15	5.7 lbs.

1. With battery. 2. Height/width/length in inches. NA: Not available.

home deck: the tracking adjustment could not eliminate noise and sharpness losses.

The Zenith had the best low-light image. It stayed light and airy when the other two showed heavy grain. The Canon has a gain switch that lets you trade the roughness for a picture that looks too dark.

The Zenith is a hi-fi stereo machine and sounded, as expected, the most like FM stereo radio. I taped the last half of a live orchestral accompaniment with impressive results. EP results were equally good until I checked its compatibility on my hi-fi home deck, where mistracking caused noticeable roughness.

The Magnavox was poorest in audio performance, ranging from AM radio quality at the SP speed down to telephone quality at EP. The Canon was well-served by the standard 8mm mono hi-fi system that gave FM radio quality. It was boosted by a good microphone with clear, sharp highs.

All the machines have six-to-one zoom

ratios. Canon's widest angle is about 10 percent greater than the Magnavox's. The Zenith falls in between. The power zoom took seven seconds on the Magnavox, eight on the other two. Since I like to set my own pace, I only used the power zoom when I needed to shoot with one hand. Canon perversely places the zoom controls off the hand grip; its manual zoom, however, was the easiest to use. All three lenses can shift into a macro close-up mode, although the Zenith has an odd problem with close-ups: its brightly flashing tally light makes objects pulsate in red.

In autofocus, Canon scored the best. Its system worked in low light reliably and quickly. The Zenith was slightly less sensitive and more tentative: it always paused a second before acting. The Magnavox seemed to have trouble locking onto subjects the others targeted easily.

The auto white balance mechanisms all fared well, though the Canon requires an

Buyer's Guide

Dimensions ²	Tape Speeds	Max. Record Time	Lens Speed	Zoom Ratio	Special Features
5 x 5 x 8	SP	120 min.	f/1.4	—	auto: iris, white balance; backlight; EVF remote
7 x 5 x 15	SP	90 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
8 x 5 x 15	SP	120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
5 x 6 x 12	SP/LP	240 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
5 x 6 x 12	SP/LP	240 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro; PCM audio
6 x 5 x 10	SP	120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
5 x 7 x 13	SP	120 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
8 x 5 x 14	SP/EP	240 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: iris, white balance; EVF
6 x 7 x 10	SP	60 min.	f/1.2	2.5:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
5 x 6 x 13	SP/EP	240 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
NA	SP	120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
5 x 5 x 6	SP	120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
6 x 5 x 11	SP	120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
5 x 5 x 12	SP	120 min.	f/1.2	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro
6 x 5 x 4	SP/LP	240 min.	f/1.6	3:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
7 x 4 x 13	SP	90 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF
5 x 7 x 8	SP	120 min.	f/1.6	—	auto: iris, white balance; backlight
4 x 4 x 9	SP	120 min.	NA	—	auto: focus, iris, white balance
4 x 4 x 9	SP	120 min.	f/1.6	—	auto: iris, white balance
6 x 5 x 11	SP	120 min.	f/1.6	—	auto: iris, white balance; splash proof
6 x 5 x 9	SP	120 min.	f/1.6	2.5:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; backlight; EVF; macro
7 x 4 x 13	SP	90 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; EVF; macro

7 x 6 x 15	Beta II	200 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: focus, iris, white balance; macro
7 x 6 x 15	Beta IS Hi Band	90 min.	f/1.4	6:1	auto: iris, white balance; macro; EVF

Information provided by manufacturers.

indoor/outdoor setting even on full auto, which undercuts the concept. Manual adjustment of the Zenith is fussy because the only setting indicator is inside the viewfinder. Both the Zenith and the Canon have sluggish manual overrides for the lens aperture, while the Magnavox has a helpful backlight button.

Even more intriguing was the high-speed shutter switch on the Magnavox. In strong light, it shortens the exposure time for each video frame, virtually eliminating blurs. In normal playback the shutter imparted a stroboscopic feeling, though it was impossible to view still frames because of the Magnavox's video-head configuration: SP freeze frames were marred by noise bands.

The microphone on the Magnavox can't be switched out, so there is a risk of howling feedback every time playback is halted. All three can be set to power up directly into the record pause mode.

The weak link in the recording chain is the start-stop button on each hand grip. The Zenith button often stuck, while the Magnavox button was touchy: barely brushing it would start and stop the recording inadvertently. Yet pressing it firmly sometimes didn't work. Canon's button worked well. However, combining start and stop on the same button virtually guarantees you will accidentally leave the camera running from time to time.

For my tastes, all these machines are too big and heavy. At four pounds, the Magnavox weighs as much as a half gallon of milk and takes up even more space. The Canon is a quarter-pound heavier but considerably larger. The Zenith displaces at least two half-gallons' worth and weighs just about as much. Taking either of the two smaller machines on an outing is a project, never a whim, while taking the Zenith is a production. I prefer the smaller, quart-sized machines available from Sony,

Aiwa, and JVC, even though they lack the automatic features that weigh down these.

If these were the only units on the market, which would I choose? If I wanted mostly to record live music performances, it would be the Zenith. But for everyday use it's too large: I felt conspicuous and intimidating carrying it. As for the Magnavox, the Compact VHS concept leaves me cool. While the picture is good at SP, the sound is only fair, and I'd hate to have to stop every 20 minutes to insert a new \$6 tape. At EP speed, moreover, the sound really falls off.

The Canon yields two hours on a \$10 8mm tape, hi-fi sound and reasonable pictures. Its flying erase head makes in-camera editing practical, and it's about as light as any machine with equivalent features. While not the smallest, at least its length and the forward placement of its viewfinder allow it to be steadied against one's shoulder and head. Color me Canon. —S.F.

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WHERE'S BUSTER?

By Frank Lovece

Despite Renewed Interest, Only A Handful Of Buster Keaton's Classic Comedies Are On Tape

Charlie Chaplin may be the quintessential silent film comedian, but Buster Keaton is the silents' consummate clown. His Great Stone Face squeezes out pure, unthinking laughter using the inexorable logic of nature. In *The General*, *Sherlock, Jr.*, *The Navigator* and other masterpieces, Keaton is an innocent in a mechanical universe—often in universe-like mechanisms.

Unlike slapstick's other great clowns—Laurel & Hardy, the Keystone Kops, Fatty Arbuckle—Keaton is not a buffoon. And unlike the eternal freshman Harold Lloyd (who with Keaton and Chaplin comprised the box-office power trio of silent comedy), Keaton portrays characters whose travails and triumphs result less from nature's benevolence than its miraculous clockwork construction.

Keaton's long career peaked in the 1920s, withered in the '30s, then experienced a renewal that lasted until his death in 1966. Now he may be about to regain his rightful place next to Chaplin in silent comedy's pantheon. This summer, PBS plans to broadcast a Keaton documentary produced by Kevin Brownlow and David Gill, who also made *The Unknown Chaplin*. Raymond Rohauer, the controversial film archivist and distributor who controls the rights to virtually all of Keaton's movies, has just uncovered what he describes as Keaton's remaining lost film, the 1921 short *Hard Luck*. Rohauer's long-in-progress Keaton biography, a major film retrospective, and possible video releases are also in the works.

Yet despite the hints of a revival, Keaton's video legacy is unfortunately incomplete. Only four of his thirteen features from the 1920s and a handful of his shorts from 1917 to 1923 appear on video. VCR owners can also see him in his later years, as a supporting player in everything from *Sunset Boulevard* to *Beach Blanket Bingo*. Keaton video odds-and-ends also include a 1965 Canadian short and a fascinatingly awful local TV show made in the '50s. Regarding the video future of what's not presently in circulation, Rohauer says tantalizingly, "We're in no mad rush. Timing is everything."

"Raymond doesn't want them out and around on videotape," ex-



HANDTINTING: BILL KOBASZ

The Great Stone Face in 'The Navigator'



A Keaton panorama (clockwise from top left): Buster readies for a dive in 'The Navigator,' joins the party in 'How to Stuff a Wild Bikini,' accompanist Jimmy Durante in 'What, No Beer?,' and rests on Jack Palance's shoulder in 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.'

plains Keaton's 66-year-old widow, Eleanor, now Rohauer's business partner. "He says the films will lose their value if everyone can have them in their homes. Also, he can't bear the thought of someone else making money from them."

What is it about Keaton that has traveled so well from vaudeville to video? Film critic Andrew Sarris hinted at the answer when he observed that Chaplin and Keaton represent the difference between "the function of things and the meaning of things, between eccentricity and mysticism, between man as machine and man as angel." But that hardly explains the unmitigated fun of watching Buster being chased by armies of cops, angry brides, or head-hunters. Or dodging vindictive boulders (in a sequence from *Seven Chances* that inspired the opening of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*). You don't need to contemplate why Keaton doing brilliant things with a steam engine, a swordfish, or some wackadoo device for plucking eggs out of boiling water is funny. You just laugh.

BORN IN A TRUNK

Joseph Frank Keaton was born to medicine-show performers on Oct. 4, 1895 in Piqua, Kansas. The Two Keatons often kept their first-born infant bedded down in an offstage trunk while they performed. It was an unconventional crib, but Buster was an unconventional kid. He earned his nickname, so legend goes, after falling down a flight of boarding-house stairs. Fellow performer Harry Houdini picked up the unhurt, laughing infant and told his mother, "That's some *buster* your baby took!"

Buster made his stage debut at nine months, crawling from the trunk to tug at his father's leg and earn his first round of applause. The Two Keatons soon graduated to vaudeville with Buster as The Human Mop. This routine ended with Buster's father, Joe, grabbing a valise handle sewn into his son's clothing and throwing the child wildly into the wings.

It sounds cruel, but Buster loved it. The three-year-old budding star also learned that a deadpan expression drew bigger laughs.

In 1917, Myra Keaton left her alcoholic, battering husband. Buster moved to New York to try his luck as a solo. His agent, Max Hart, also handled the popular film comedian Fatty (Roscoe) Arbuckle. Hart got Keaton a top-dollar part in a Broadway revue, but a few days before rehearsals began, Keaton ran into Arbuckle. As Eleanor Keaton relates, "Roscoe said, 'Why don't you come down and watch us make a movie? You'll have fun.' Buster went down [to Arbuckle's Comique Films studio on East 48 Street] and the next thing Buster knew he was in front of the camera working."

The project was a one-reel comedy called *The Butcher Boy*. Keaton loved it. He got out of his lucrative contract with the revue to earn \$40 a week in the movies. He

would've paid Arbuckle for the chance.

By the time he was drafted in June 1918, Buster had shot a dozen shorts with Arbuckle and was a hot young star. After the army, he moved to Los Angeles, where Comique had relocated. Despite offers, he later said, of \$1,000 a week from both Warner and Fox studios, Keaton stayed with Arbuckle and his partner/producer Joe Schenck.

After three more shorts with Keaton, Arbuckle was farmed out to Paramount. Schenck in turn let Buster write and direct (with Eddie Cline) his own two-reel shorts. Keaton's genius flowered.

The 19 two-reelers he concocted for Metro and First National between 1920 and 1923 showcased not only his long-in-stilled comic talent, but an intuitive grasp of cinema. Keaton fell in love with the camera, tinkering with it to expand its creative capabilities. In *The Playhouse* (1921), Keaton used multiple exposures to play every role in a minstrel show, as well as the orchestra and audience! In *Cops* (1922), a simple misunderstanding is taken to extremes as lonely city landscapes are suddenly filled with impossible numbers of policemen chasing a bewildered, acrobatic, stone-faced fellow. It ends with the cops nabbing Buster and (on complete prints) a final shot of a tombstone topped by his familiar hat. This surreal, almost disturbing touch set Keaton apart from his contemporaries. Yet Keaton's vision made him a superstar with only polite but steady box-office receipts, much like Woody Allen's present profitability.

After succeeding in a full-length comedy (1920's *The Saphead*) over which he had no behind-the-scenes control, Keaton was given full rein to produce features for Metro/MGM in 1923. He often used co-directors and a team of writers, but from then until his decline five years later, Keaton's movies were unmistakably his own. Schenck had formed Buster Keaton Productions, whose films would be distributed by established studios. (Apparently at Buster's naive insistence, the star was not a shareholder.) The company was dissolved in 1940; the firm's assets were sold to Rohauer in 1971.

THE KEATON FEATURES

Keaton constructed the first of his classic features, *The Three Ages* (1923), essentially as three shorts with the same players performing the same story in the Stone Age, ancient Rome, and Prohibition-era America. His first true feature was *Our Hospitality* (1923), a comic thriller about genteel murder plans in the South.

The films became increasingly, dazzlingly inventive. In *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924), Keaton is a movie-theater projectionist who dreams he's entered the movie. (This is 60 years before *The Purple Rose of Cairo*!) *The Navigator* (1924) uses an abandoned freighter more as a character than a prop. *Seven Chances* (1925) reprises the



The sad-eyed Buster of 'Spite Marriage'.

structure of *Cops* with boulders and would-be brides.

In *Go West* (1925), Keaton—simultaneously tweaking and paying homage to Chaplin—essays a tragi-comic character, Friendless, whose companion and comic foil is a cow. The highly successful mistaken-identity comedy *Battling Butler* (1926) gave Keaton the cachet for Joe Schenck—now the shining knight of United Artists—to invest half-a-million dollars in Keaton's pet project: *The General*.

The General (1926) is routinely cited as one of the greatest movies of the American cinema. Essentially two long chases framed with expository material, it presents Keaton as Civil War-era train engineer Johnnie Gray. He and his train, The General, are considered too valuable for Johnnie to fight for the Confederacy. Mistakenly thinking him a coward, his sweetheart Annabelle spurns him.

Union spies make off with the train (and Annabelle), planning to destroy the tracks and telegraph lines behind them. Johnnie gives chase, first in a handcar, then in a second train. He finally kidnaps The General (and Annabelle) back, with Union troops in frantic pursuit. The film overwhelms the viewer with one miraculously inventive gag after another. It was, at the time, a flop.

After a Los Angeles premiere on Dec. 22, 1926 and a Tokyo premiere on New Year's Eve, *The General* opened in New York City in February 1927 to scathing reviews. The *New York Telegram* called it "tired and stodgy." The *World* stated, "It is one of the boasts of Mr. Keaton that throughout his pictures he never cracks a smile. In the case of *The General*, neither did I." However, the *Herald Tribune* re-

marked that, "perhaps, judged by other standards, it is a fine and subtle thing with 'epic qualities'."

The relative failure of *The General* did not derail Buster's career; the funny *College* (1927) and *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (1928) followed. But when Schenck left independent production, Buster signed with MGM as a star and, tragically, gave up creative control of his films. Neither *The Camerman* (1928) nor *Spite Marriage* (1929) matched his previous work.

Compounding matters, Buster began developing a serious drinking problem in 1925. His popularity continued to decline through *Free and Easy*, *Doughboys* (1930) and *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* and *Sidewalks of New York* (1931).

MGM teamed the increasingly alcoholic Buster with Jimmy Durante, and they made three films together: *The Passionate Plumber*, *Speak Easily* (1932) and *What, No Beer?* (1933). Ironically these lame efforts were sizable hits.

Buster grew increasingly unreliable. During the shooting of *What, No Beer?* Keaton, in an alcoholic stupor, flew with his nurse, Mae Scribbens Hawley, to Mexico, where they married. Finally, in 1933, with a few months left on his seven-year contract, MGM fired him. Keaton was out of work. It was a hell of a year. Arbuckle passed away; Keaton was so out of it, reports author Tom Dardis in *Keaton: The Man Who Wouldn't Lie Down*, that Mae sometimes turned courtesan to raise cash. The only viable job offer was from Educational Films. For \$5,000 a shot, Buster starred in 16 horrendous two-reel comedies between 1933 and 1937. (RKO Home Video appended two of them—*Jail Bait* and *Mixed Magic*—to a pair of Katharine Hepburn film releases, *Christopher Strong* and *Morning Glory*, although the packaging doesn't specifically mention them.)

Between 1939 and 1941, he made ten more "cheapies" for Columbia, home of the Three Stooges. He also made a well-received French vehicle, the recently rediscovered *Le Roi des Champs Elysees* (1934), but it got no U.S. distribution. A British bomb (*The Invader/An Old Spanish Custom*) that unfortunately did play here helped bury Buster even more.

Mae filed for divorce in July 1935. By 1937, Keaton was on the MGM payroll as a lowly staff writer. He got \$100 a week to pen gags for Red Skelton and others, including the Marx Brothers, who derided his routines.

"I'm always surprised," Keaton later wrote, "when people ask me if it was a comedown to take a job like that at such a small salary at the studio where I'd been a \$3,000 a week star. The answer is no. I had not the slightest sense of humiliation."



"I never had the pride other actors are afflicted with."

For one thing, I'd had ten years to forget my old grievances. For another, I never had the sort of pride other actors are afflicted with."

BACK ON TRACK

Keaton's inventive gags soon earned him raises; he also began to lay off the booze. Occasional acting jobs turned up; Nelson Eddy once recalled that Buster was fired from one 1940 film for stealing scenes from the stars.

While a gagwriter, Keaton appeared in a parodic melodrama, *The Villain Still Pursued Her* (1940), and as the Indian Lonesome Polecat in the 1940 adaptation of *Li'l Abner*. He had bits in other films, including a memorable moment in the classic *Sunset Boulevard* (1959). Word went around that if not the star he once was, Keaton was at least dependable. This set the stage for a vaunted "comeback" in Charlie Chaplin's poignant *Limelight* (1952).

Keaton was soon deluged with TV offers and more small movie roles. He even had a weekly half-hour comedy series (1950-1951) on Los Angeles' KTTV. About 40 episodes were broadcast to the West Coast; it was reportedly popular, although contemporaneous reviews and a viewing of a surviving example (*Life with Buster Keaton*, Shokus Video) confirm how bad—albeit fascinatingly surreal—Buster's TV sojourn was.

The strongest impetus for Keaton's renewal was undoubtedly his third marriage, to Eleanor, in 1940. Eleanor's love and support solidified Keaton's life. Fourteen years later, Raymond Rohauer solidified his past by securing for Keaton and himself virtually all the rights to Keaton's films.

Rohauer had founded a film society

and opened L.A.'s Coronet as an art-house/retrospective theater. The Coronet's bill mixed everything from classic silents to the homoerotic works of Kenneth Anger. One day in 1954, *The General* was the *film du jour*.

"Buster hadn't seen *The General* in years," says Eleanor, "and he wanted me to see it. Raymond recognized Buster and their friendship started."

"I was in the projection room," Rohauer remembers. "I got a ring that Buster Keaton was in the lobby. I go down and there he is with Eleanor. The next day I met with him at his home. I didn't realize we were going to join forces. But I realized he had this I-don't-care attitude about his stuff. He said, 'It's valueless. I don't own the rights'."

Rohauer, who has amassed a huge library of both silent and sound films, decided to mount a Keaton crusade, collecting and saving from decay as many films as he could find. Keaton himself had prints of at least six films: *The*

Three Ages, *Sherlock, Jr.*, *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, *College* (missing one reel), and shorts *The Boat* (1921) and *My Wife's Relations* (1922). "There is no other known print of *The Boat*," says Rohauer. "And that one was rapidly decomposing." Rohauer and Keaton began to transfer the films from highly combustible nitrate stock to safety negative stock. (No one knew it at the time, but MGM, according to biographer Dardis, had saved all of Buster's 1920-26 features, as well as his first eight two-reelers.)

But saving a film is not the same as releasing it on video, and Rohauer has chosen to limit the distribution of the works he controls to film screenings. In addition, the status of three Keaton features and five shorts that the U.S. Copyright Office says are in the public domain (PD), and which have been released by various video labels, is gray. Rohauer states that since *College* and *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* opened in England, a country covered by the Berne International Copyright Convention, they were automatically protected here. Kim Brown, an information specialist with the Copyright Office, asserts that "the mere display of works in a foreign country does not in itself constitute protection." On the other hand, even if a film is PD, no one can copy a particular print or negative that you own without permission. If you possess the last existing copy of a PD work, then that's that. You control it.

One of Rohauer's harshest critics is Paul Killiam, a rival film distributor who has litigated at least two suits against Rohauer that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is Killiam's copy of *The General* that Blackhawk Video distributes. In the

continued on page 119



The only thing a bounty hunter
doesn't waste is time.

A hand
targeted and
written
self-blinding
comes to life
in the new
action film

RUTGER HAUER WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

With the help of the country's most
famous bounty hunter (Rutger Hauer),
Steve McQueen's son, Scott, has been
recruited to track down the
bounty hunter's son and bring him up to
justice.

Now, McQueen's son is facing the ultimate
challenge: to bring down a criminal mastermind
who will stop at nothing to control every
lives he can. The confrontation should

One thing's sure: Nick Randall's the only
visionist capable of eliminating the
threatening America.

And he'll waste no time taking out the trash.



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THE NEW VIDEO

Kidcorders, Playroom VCRs, Interactive Robots,

By Louis Kesten

For parents television has often been an "electronic babysitter," a way to keep children quiet. The VCR gave parents more control over what children saw, while the tremendous proliferation of videos for children has let parents buy and rent more entertaining and educational programs, decide how much and when kids should watch, and

gave kids, like the rest of us, alternatives to broadcast TV. Yet children's relationship to the TV remained largely passive. Once mom or dad inserted a tape and pushed "play," all a kid could do was watch.

Not any more, however. A new generation of innovative toys and programs is preparing to thrust upon children full citizenship in the video culture—whether or

not their parents are ready. Toy companies are introducing sophisticated, easy-to-use hardware—TVs, VCRs, even a camcorder—that kids can use without parental supervision, plus bears, dolls, and robots that respond to light and sound cues from television sets. VCR board games, a new success with both children and adults, are rapidly multiplying (see sidebar). Even



Video toys for hi-tech play. Top: Sega Light Phaser and Spinnaker's 'Agatha Christie: Behind the Screen' VCR game (\$20 each). Center: Sega videogame cartridges (\$15 each), Pressman's 'Three Stooges' VCR game (\$40), Nintendo's Zapper and Robotic Operating Buddy (\$180 with Nintendo Entertainment System), Sega control Stick and Sports Pad (\$20 each), and Fisher-Price's Pixelvision camcorder (\$150). Bottom: Sega videogame system (\$110), Bandai's Family Fun fitness mat (\$45) and Axlon's Tech Force robots (\$250).

TOY CHEST

3D Games Give Childhood A Hi-tech Twist

the videogame console, the hottest toy of the early '80s, has returned to entertain a new generation of kids.

The most astonishing new video toy is Fisher-Price's Pixelvision, a lightweight camcorder that will sell for an amazing \$150 when it is introduced this fall. Adult camcorders typically cost \$1,000 to \$2,000. Of course, at this price, you shouldn't expect the features or picture quality of an adult camcorder. Pixelvision's black & white image has only 120 vertical by 90 horizontal pixels. They produce a fairly sharp image on a small TV screen, but a slightly fuzzy one on larger sets. The video also suffers from a slight ripple, and the sound from the unidirectional microphone is a little whooshy. However, the image is watchable and the camcorder is simple to use. Kids are bound to enjoy making their own videos, and the \$150 pricetag may seduce a few adults as well.

The plastic-encased Pixelvision weighs a mere two pounds with tape and batteries. There are only five controls: record, play, rewind, stop/eject, and on/off. All are in the handle under the cassette hatch. It records on any high-bias C-90 audiocassette with a fixed recording head that whips through the tape at 13.7 inches per second, for 5.5 minutes of video recording on each side. It will run for five hours on six AA batteries packed into the camcorder's handle. It can also be powered through an AC adapter.

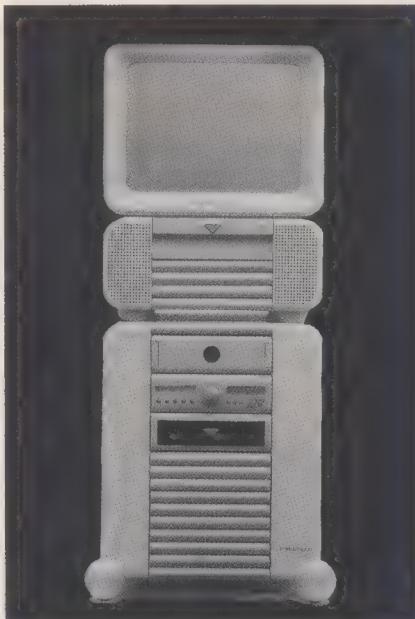
The fixed focus reportedly works from four inches away to infinity, and the lens adjusts for indoor or outdoor use. It has a simple optical viewfinder and LED indicators to keep tabs on light levels and battery power. The Pixelvision comes with an RF adapter that allows it to be connected to any TV set, although a 4.5-inch black & white monitor is available for an additional \$50.

"Kids won't be intimidated by the camcorder, so they can concentrate on the subject of the video rather than on getting the camcorder to work for them," observes Fisher-Price product design manager Bob Fisher. Though color recording is at least a few years down the road, Pixelvision has already been hailed as a breakthrough in video technology—a compliment rarely accorded a low-end product.

Some of Pixelvision's innovations, like the fixed recording head, were explored during early efforts to build a videotape recorder in the 1950s. But this camcorder's low cost—one-tenth of most adult models—is bound to attract a lot of attention.

THE REAL THING

Lots of kids have TVs in their own rooms, and a few even have their own VCRs. Soon, they may be able to start



Worlds of Wonder's WonderVision with TV, VCR, and Smart Stand.

their own mini-media dens with hardware crafted for kidsize spaces. Worlds of Wonder, the folks who gave us *Teddy Ruxpin* and *Lazer Tag*, are trying to move into kids' rooms with a modular entertainment system designed for children. WonderVision, due out later this year for \$499, combines a 13-inch color TV and a VHS video-cassette player in one cabinet. The TV features automatic color tuning, a remote control with on-screen channel display, programmable channel selection, and cable compatibility. Both the TV and the VCP are available separately for \$299 each and are housed in rounded cabinets that come in red, ivory, blue, or charcoal.

The optional WonderVision Smart Stand, for \$149, is a simple docking system with a single plug for a wall outlet. Other WonderVision modules can be snapped into the stand. Options include an AM/FM radio and cassette player, a remote speaker, and wireless headphones, each for \$49. A CD player is also planned for the system. The \$800 cost of the entire system puts WonderVision out of the range of most parents, but if you're tired of the kids watching cartoons on the family set and want to get a system just for them, it's something to consider.

SHOOTING BACK

Since the debut of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* in 1983, toy companies have used cartoon shows as vehicles for selling toys. Now, they're taking the next step, making toys—including robots, spaceships, and animals—that actually respond to the action on the screen.

Three companies, Mattel (the firm behind *He-Man*), Impulse, and Axlon, are offering competing interactive products. Mattel's *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* is a weekly program mixing live action and computer animation. The highlight of the toy line is a \$35 jet that fires at on-screen enemies from up to ten feet away and scores points each time it hits the target. On-screen enemies can return fire and deduct points. The jet's cockpit ejects when the score hits zero.

Two other accessories can also fire at the screen: the Power Base, which is Captain Power's fortress, and the Interlocker, the home of his foe, Lord Dread. The four-inch Captain Power figure comes with a Power On Energizer that lights up on a cue from the show and causes the jets and fortresses to gain or lose points. Each weekly *Captain Power* installment will have five minutes of such interactive footage. Mattel will also release three 15-minute VHS cassettes with Battle Training scenes. The toys operate independently from the TV show so kids can fire at each other's toys.

Impulse's entry is a daily cartoon called *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs* that interacts with a car and a spaceship through an infrared receiver hooked to the TV. The

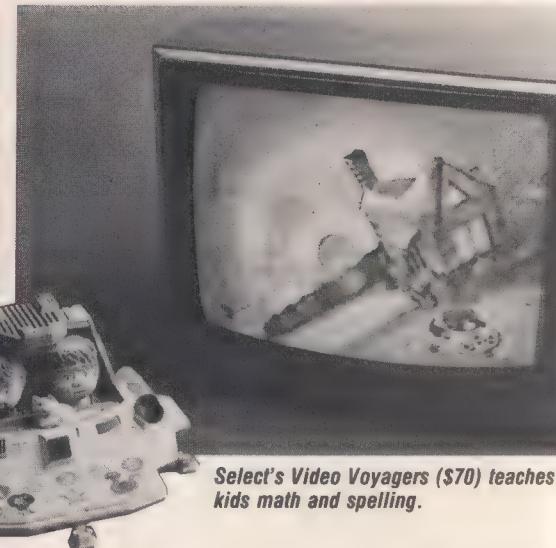
Toy Chest



Mattel's Captain Power jets (\$35 each) let kids shoot back at the bad guys in a weekly, live-action TV show.

\$50 Interactor spaceship lets a child shoot back at villains on the screen while keeping score. The infrared device also controls a \$50 vehicle, turning it on if it's near the TV and racing it around the living room.

Tumbleweed, a talking prairie dog, receives voice cues from the broadcasts and talks to child viewers during the show, saying things like "Saber Rider's in trouble.



Select's Video Voyagers (\$70) teaches kids math and spelling.

Let's help him out." Again, all the toys have independent controls, so kids can play with them without the TV. The car and the Interactor will debut before Christmas, with Tumbleweed to follow next year along with a line of videocassettes and other unspecified toys.

Axon, the company owned by Atari founder Nolan Bushnell, will introduce a

cartoon series called *Tech Force and the Moto Monsters*. Tech Force, a \$250 set of robots, imitates the action of the characters on screen by responding to inaudible tones. The program controls the red Moto-Monsters while the child operates the blue Tech Force robots. When the show isn't on, the robots are controlled by *continued after next page*

VCR Games: The Next Generation

When VIDEO last looked into VCR board games ("Let the Games Begin," Nov. '86), toy companies were still learning how to use the video format.



Parker Brothers' 'Clue II.'

They succeeded well enough with the public to inspire a new generation of games. Here's a look at this year's efforts.

Parker Brothers, whose *Clue* is still the model for VCR games, has developed a sequel, *Clue II: Murder in Disguise*. It takes the familiar characters like Miss Scarlet and Colonel Mustard out of Boddy Mansion and moves them to more exotic locations like Paris,

Tangiers, and Rangoon. *Clue II* features 18 different cases and 40 murders on its 60-minute tape, which sells for \$39. Parker's other new entry, *Let's Go to the Races*, lets players bet on 40 different horse races. This \$29 game comes with party invitations, and fast forwards to random parts of the tape so the game can be played over and over.

Spinnaker is trying its hand at mystery games with *Agatha Christie: Behind the Screen* and *Ellery Queen: Operation Murder*. Each tape features a single murder, but the clues to the culprit's identity change each time the game is played, allowing 48 possible resolutions. Each game sells for \$20.

Pressman's *The Three Stooges* game, ostensibly for adults, requires competitors to play cards against each other based on the on-screen abuse perpetrated by Moe, Larry, and Curly. (Shemp, alas, doesn't appear.) "Nyuk nyuk" cards ask players to cross their eyes, bop other players on the head, yell "soitanly," or mimic other Stooge activity. Good, stupid fun for \$40.

VCR Enterprises had one of last year's surprise hits with *NFL VCR Quarterback*, which mixed football strategy with clips from NFL games. This year, VCR Enterprises will try to duplicate its success with *NBA Basketball*, *NHL Hockey*, and *Major League Baseball*. All use footage of the pros in

action and will be released pending approval from the respective leagues. Prices are not yet available.

CSI Video will also have a line of sports games, with promotional support from famous ex-jocks. *Mickey Mantle's All American Baseball* uses cards, dice, and 60 minutes of footage of the Mick to simulate the national pastime. *Pele's World Class Soccer* packages a similar set-up with a 60-minute tape of the Brazilian star in action.

Milton Bradley's VCR games are designed for three-to six-year-olds. They feature simple game play and lack fast-forwarding, rewinding, and pausing. *Candy Land* and *Chutes and Ladders* are animated adaptations of the familiar board games, while *Disney's Cartoon Classics* and *Disney's Movie Classics* require children to match game pieces with scenes from *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, *Pinocchio*, and *Mickey Mouse*, Donald Duck, and Goofy cartoons. Each game retails for \$20.

Scholastic/Lorimar also has a series of VCR games for kids using the popular Colorforms characters. Each *Colorforms Learn 'n' Play Adventure* comes with an animated tape. Kids imitate the action of the on-screen figures by moving the Colorforms along the game board. The games cost \$25 each.

—Louis Kesten

VIDEO RETAILERS

Have trouble finding copies of VIDEO at your local newsstand? Want to know where to send a friend to pick up a copy? The following will help—it's a list of retail stores across the country, that carry at least 20 copies of VIDEO every month.

ALABAMA

Video Village, Mobile

ARKANSAS

Video Vision, Monticello
National Video, North Little Rock
Movie Mart Video Rental, Ft. Smith

CALIFORNIA

Video Journeys, Los Angeles
Video Archives, Manhattan Beach
Video Box, Reseda
Todays Video, Azusa
On The Go Video, Diamond Bar
A & M Video Palace, Hemet
Video Mart Inc., San Bernardino
Picture Show, Huntington Beach
C & W Video, Camarillo
Unique Video, Tulean
Home Movies to Go, Grove City
Video Biz, Lompac
Home Movies to Go, Santa Maria
Video Affairs, Belmont
Laser World Inc., San Francisco
Chois Homes Video, San Francisco
Video Station, Benicia
Video Plus, Concord
Ye Olde Video Shoppe, Vallejo
Front Row Video, Oakland
Video Room Inc., Oakland
Pick A Flick Video, Cupertino
American Video Center, Milpitas
Video Box Office, Scotts Valley

COLORADO

Video Country Inc., Denver
Video Visions, Northglenn
Pacific, Avon

CONNECTICUT

National Video, Avon
Movies And More, Manchester
Video Galaxy X, Enfield
Playtime Video Inc., Newington
Rabar's Video, Branford
Video World of Derby, Derby
Video Movies of Monroe, Monroe
Video Connection, Bridgeport
Video Movies of Brookfield, Brookfield
Candlewood Video, New Fairfield

DELAWARE

Video Station, Wilmington
Towne Video, Fenwick Island
Towne Video, Milford
Towne Video, Rehoboth Beach

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Sovrez Inc./Metro Video Centers, Washington
Video Biz, Washington

FLORIDA

Everything Video, Tallahassee
Video Video, Pensacola
National Home Video, Tavares
Video Express, Palm Bay
Variety Records & Video, Miami
Video Connection, Miami
Sebasco Inc., Miami
Video Station, Riviera Beach
Video House, Ft. Pierce
American Video Express, Stuart
Video X Tron of Stuart Inc., Stuart
Masters Video, Dunedin
Video Connection, Largo
Video Empire, Palm Harbor
Video Biz, Sarasota
Video Corner, St. Petersburg
Video Biz, Ft. Myers

GEORGIA

Home Video, Norcross

HAWAII

Jack Wada Electronics, Lihue
Paradise Video Inc., Wailuku

ILLINOIS

State Electronic, Mount Prospect
Video Alternatives, Palatine
Laser Audio Video Inc., Park Ridge
Video Hotline, Winnetka
Circle Communications, Forest Park
B & B Video, Carol Stream
Pro Visual, Dolton
Video Basics Inc., Joliet
Video In Motion Inc., Aurora
CountrySide Home Video, Countryside
Video Sixty Six, Countryside
Showbiz Video Sales/Rentals, Chicago
Diaco Video, Niles
Larrys Book Store, Chicago
McPherson Electronics, Dixon
Bac Theaters Inc., Belleville
J & L Video, Mt. Sterling

INDIANA

Mr. Video, Franklin
Mr. Video East, Indianapolis
Video Biz, Portage
Merrillville Video, Merrillville
Video Biz, Elkhart

IOWA

Video Biz of Des Moines, Des Moines
Showtime Video, Des Moines
Video City Rental Inc., Waterloo
Pick A Show Video, Council Bluff
Video Station, Cedar Rapids
Blackhawk Films, Bettendorf

KANSAS

Duncan's Movie, Magic, Topeka

KENTUCKY

Home Video, Louisville
Video Visions #2, Louisville
Video Visions, Louisville
Video Fantastic, Richmond
Video Productions, Cynthiana
Classic Videos, Henderson

LOUISIANA

Video Biz, Metairie
Video Biz of Slidell, Slidell
Star Video, Baton Rouge

MAINE

Video Store, Auburn

MARYLAND

Video Tek Inc., Temple Hills
Guide Video, Rockville
Video Store, Silver Spring
Columbia Video Center, Columbia
Greetings & Readings, Towson

MASSACHUSETTS

Video House Inc., Hadley
Video Dimensions, Auburn
Video Nook, North Brookfield
Video Dimensions, Southbridge
Sake Video Take, Natick
Video Station, Woburn
Video Revolution, Andover
Act 1 Video Inc., Dracut
Video Connection, Saugus
Family Flicks Unlimited, Amesbury
Video Biz, Northshore, Gloucester
Action Video, Salem
Video Ventures Inc., Hingham
Avenue Video, Malden
Westend Video, Waltham
T S V Video, Medford
Video Biz, Needham
Home Video Center, Plymouth
Video Paradise, Plymouth
Mr. Video, New Bedford
National Video, North Dartmouth

MICHIGAN

New York Video World, Farmington Hills
Video Connection, Farmington Hills
Rainy Day Video Inc., East Detroit
Entertainment, East Detroit
ADM Offices, Rochester
Abbott Video Inc., Roseville
Discover Video Pleasant Ridge, Pleasant Ridge
Thomas Video, Royal Oak
Act 1 Video, Sterling Heights
TSV Video, Sterling Hts.
Starburst Video, St. Clair Shores
Movie Man, Taylor
The Listening Post, Bay City
Video Junction, Bay City
Video Today, Holland
Premier Video, Grand Rapids
Discount, Grand Rapids
Video Shoppe, Wyoming

MINNESOTA

Crown Video Corp., St. Paul
Bigelow Video, New Hope
Video Express LTD, Duluth

MISSOURI

Movie Palace, Ballwin
Movies to Rent, Bridgeton
Video Castle Stores, Kirkville

MONTANA

Video Station, Bozeman

NEVADA

Video Tonite, Las Vegas
Video Plus, Reno

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Video Station, Amherst
Movie Loft, Hudson
Video Biz, Bedford

NEW JERSEY

Video Plus, Cliffside Park
Valley Video Ctr. of Clifton, Clifton
Take One Video, Hoboken
Take Two Video, Hoboken
Video Unlimited of Linden, Linden
Video Joes, Verona

Video Access, North Bergen
Video Land Inc., Parsippany

Video Odyssey Inc., Woodbridge

Take III Video, Newark

Centrill Video, Jersey City

Mac's Video Center, Jersey City

Reel To Reel Inc., Butler

Video Store, Elmwood Park

Ramapo Video Image, Wayne

Ruestes TV Repair, Paterson

Copeland Enterprises Inc., Red Bank

Video Voyagers, Netcong

Video Pavilion, Newton

Video Village Inc., Florham Park

Act One Video, East Hanover

Video Galaxy, Turnersville

The Video Store, Glendora

Family Video Center, Marmora

Risley Video Center, Millville

Yorktowne Video, Lakewood

Ippys, Manesqua

Video Exchange, Pt. Pleasant

Pik A Flick Co., Toms River

Bound Brook Video Studio, Bound Brook

Video Connection, Somerset

Video Biz, New Brunswick

NEW YORK

New Video, New York

Rare Bird Video, New York

Laser Video, New York

Video Stop Inc., New York

Classic Video, New York

Tower Video, New York

Giffen Video Corp., Staten Island

Captain Video, Staten Island

Video Investors Inc., Staten Island

Popcorn & Movies, Bronx

Video Connection of Riverdale, Riverdale

Bay Electronics, Bronx

Prime Video, Bronx

Star Video, Larchmont

County Video Inc., Elmsford

Plaza Video, Pleasantville

Video Scape, Middletown

Future Video, New Hyde Park

Arihara Home Video, Port Washington

Parkway Video & Electron Mart, Brooklyn

Shore Road Video, Brooklyn

Video Star, Flushing

Video Village, Whitestone

Video Cinema, Bayside

Video Connection, Bayside

Movies III, Little Neck

Video Flicks, Ozone Park

Video Plus, Richmond Hill

Future Video, Mineola

All Cast Video, Hewlett

Video Zone, Lynbrook

Video Connection, Merrick

Video Station Bohemia

Rainbow Video, Commack

Hollywood Movie Shore Ltd., East Setauket

Movieland USA, Levittown

Castle Video, Lindenhurst

Home Video Movies, Nesconset

24 Karat, Lake Ronkonkoma

Movieland USA, Shirley

American Video, Delmar

Video Environment Inc., Albany

National Video, Rutherford

Boob Tube, Liberty

The Movie Store, Watertown

Video Factory, Buffalo

Video Biz, Williamsburg

Video Biz, Fairport

Video Biz, Rochester

American Video Ctr., Rochester

NORTH CAROLINA

Video Connection, Greensboro

News Center in Cary Village, Cary

Box Office Video Inc., Raleigh

Video Station, Raleigh

Movies Plus, Gastonia

National Video, Ashville

Video Station, Winston-Salem

a programmable computer console that comes with them. Separate video and audio cassettes with the signals will also be available. The *Captain Power*, *Saber Rider*, and *Tech Force* shows should premier this fall on syndicated stations.

The programs are already stirring a controversy. Rather than inviting creative play, argues the Academy of Pediatrics, the toys and shows limit children's responses. Peggy Charren, president of Action for Children's Television, objects that

the technology "creates two classes of children: those who can afford the toys and those who can't." Even Impulse's Paul Roberts admits that "it's kind of like remote control in reverse. Instead of the human controlling the TV, the TV controls the human."

Phil Quigley, a spokesman for Axlon, disagrees. "You don't need the show to play the game, and you don't need the toys to watch the show," he argues. "The cues on the program are imperceptible, so kids

who don't have the robots won't feel left out." *Captain Power*'s interactive sequences, says Mattel's Candace Irving, "will be seamlessly integrated within the show," so kids who don't have the jets won't know what they're missing. The toy companies, meanwhile, are proceeding full steam ahead, as the Federal Communications Commission has approved their plans to broadcast signals to their own toys.

WHAT IS INTERACTIVE?

Some of Mattel's and Axlon's competitors have complained that their use of the word "interactive" is a misnomer because the child's play doesn't affect the on-screen action. *Worlds of Wonder* claims that its new *Teddy Ruxpin* series will allow the child to influence the outcome. Details of the program were still top-secret at press time.

Meanwhile, Select Merchandise is introducing *Video Voyagers*, an educational game that will feature that second level of interactivity. The basic module, priced at \$70, is a keyboard attached to a spaceship, which houses Victor and Vicki Voyager. The spaceship connects to a VCR. Overlays for the keyboard correspond to a series of videotapes. In the tapes, Victor and Vicki appear on-screen and ask the child to answer questions using the keyboard. The tape then jumps forward or back depending on the child's response. Portions of the tape are also chosen at random so that the game varies each time it is played. The eyes and mouths of the figures in the spaceship move in sync with the audio. Additional tapes will cost \$20 each.

Select declined to discuss the indexing and coding system that allows the VCR to fast forward to appropriate sections of the tape, but it will use the same system in its upcoming *Video Challenger*. Priced at \$30, it consists of a light gun the player uses to engage in battle with footage from war movies or computer animations. The wireless gun works as far away as 20 feet and automatically keeps score. It may not be as educational as *Video Voyagers*, but the coding system lets the VCR randomly select battle scenes from the supplied tape. "We could conceivably program any motion picture or TV footage for use with the *Video Challenger*," claims Select president Jack Winters.

Lewis Galoob's two interactive toys encourage children to sing along with videotapes. Both the Baby Talk and Smarty Bear dolls, which each cost \$80, talk back to the TV when tethered to a VCR via a \$50 transmitter. As the dolls' eyes and mouths move on cue, the tapes teach children about numbers, the alphabet, grammar, manners, and the like through participatory songs and games. The dolls can also talk without being connected to the TV.

Another educational toy designed for

continued after next page

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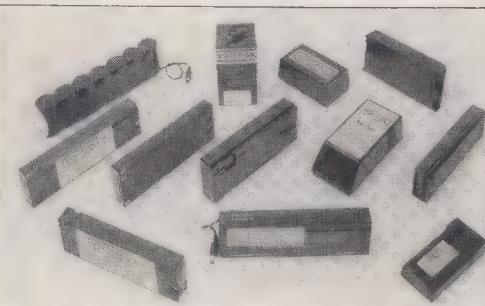
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younger children is Connor's Videosmarts, a \$50 computer that attaches to any VHS VCR. Videotapes for the system use live action puppets and animation to ask questions about letters, numbers, or safety, which the child can answer by pressing one of four large buttons on the computer console. Lights and sounds from the computer tell kids whether their answers are right or wrong. The Videosmarts system, including the cassette "Numbers 1-5/Comparisons," retails for \$50, and adds

tional 30-minute cassettes are available for \$15 each.

COLORIZATION FOR KIDS

LJN's VideoArt, for \$90, is a sort of electronic coloring book also due this fall. Using a joystick, a child can draw on the screen in any of 16 colors, record the drawings onto a blank VHS or Beta tape, save the work, flip to a blank page, or erase the current page and start over. The joystick connects to a control module that accepts

activity cartridges with games, puzzles, and items to be colored. The cartridges will have different skill levels and feature licensed characters like Mickey Mouse, Spiderman, and Hulk Hogan.

RETURN OF THE ARCADE

Videogame makers seem to have learned what Walt Disney figured out long ago: Every seven years there's a new generation of kids who haven't seen *Snow White*. It's been that long since videogames first invaded homes. Unfortunately, the market was soon swamped by fly-by-night companies with inferior games. Consumers had no way of distinguishing the bang-up from the boring, and sales plummeted. Some of the companies say they learned their lesson from the shakeout, and now are promising imaginative, carefully-licensed software for the new videogame machines.

Indeed, the videogame industry has rallied in the last year, thanks largely to three players: Nintendo, Sega, and Atari. When Nintendo introduced its Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in late 1985, it reportedly sold 90 percent of its units. The deluxe system, for \$180, comes with a control deck, two pushbutton controllers, a light-gun, two games, and R.O.B. (for Robotic Operating Buddy). The 27 NES games include arcade chestnuts like *Popeye* and *Donkey Kong*, sports games based on baseball, tennis, and football, and driving and shooting games. The graphics are clear and colorful and a few cartridges, like the clever running and jumping game *Super Mario Bros.*, are seriously addictive. The Nintendo games that use the light-gun and R.O.B. are less involving, but you can buy the control deck alone for \$99.

Two new NES peripherals will be available later this year. Bandai is introducing the Family Fun Fitness center, a mat that connects to the NES and senses when the player runs in place, jumps, or squats. An on-screen character then matches the player's movements. It's a unique approach to working out. Nintendo will also have a knitting module that helps an NES owner create scarves, sweaters, and other handknit items.

Sega's videogame system is more impressive, thanks to a better looking, more interesting game lineup. It includes sports games, recent arcade hits like *Choplifter* and *Hang-On*, movie spin-offs like *Rambo* and *Ghostbusters*, and such Sega standbys as *Astro Warrior*, an outer-space shoot-'em-up, *Fantasy Zone*, a psychedelic space journey, *Alex Kidd in Miracle World*, a running and jumping game, and *Action Fighter*, a road race/air war game James Bond fans should love. The basic Sega model, with pushbutton controls, goes for \$140. Accessories include a joystick, a track-ball, a light gun, and a graphics board

continued on page 119



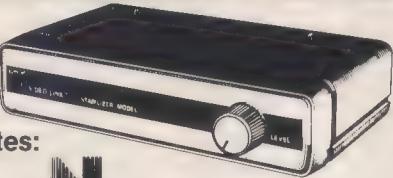
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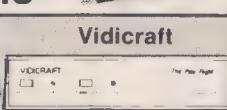


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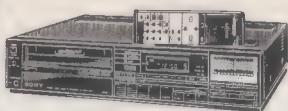
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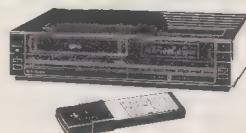
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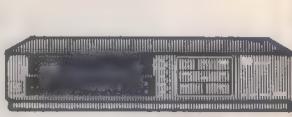
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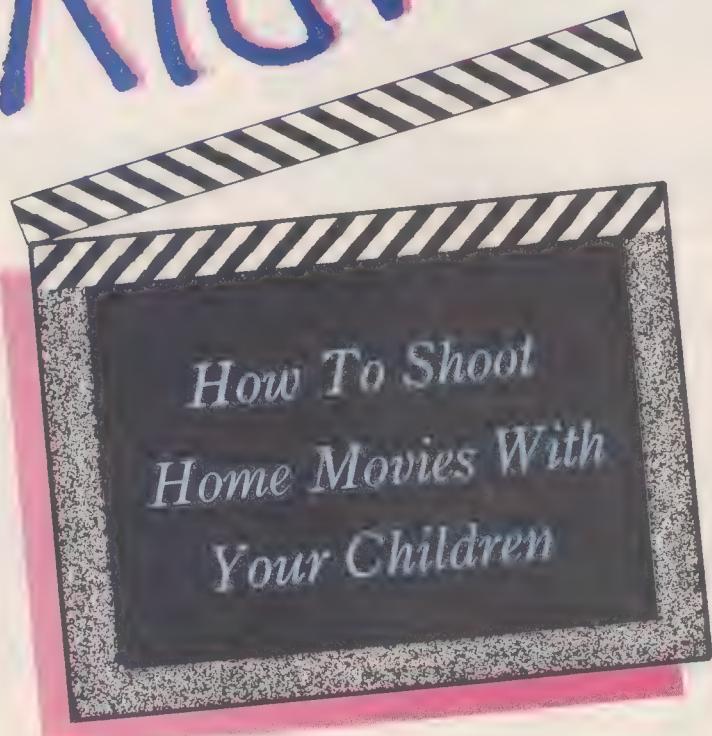


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Do-It-Yourself Kidvid



By Catherine Cella

I must be going crazy. Nothing in my house looks the way it used to, I find myself forgetting what to say, and, worst of all, I can't shake these *deja vu* experiences. Do all actors feel this way?

I suppose they do, especially if their director is as demanding as our ten-year-old son. We've made several home videos with Matt, ranging from one to ten minutes in length. All have been based on our own home-made stories, all have been made for no more than the cost of a VHS videotape, and all have been more fun than frustrating.

As a new home video producer, you will, of course, learn by doing, as we did. But this article will help you avoid some of the pitfalls.

First, select your equipment carefully. After our first effort with a rental camera and portable VCR, we decided to buy a camcorder. Its electronic viewfinder allows you to see *exactly* what's shot, and the zoom lens is a real grabber for kids. Likewise, the more automatic the camera—focus, zoom, light reading—the better. In time, children will learn to use the manual controls, but at first they should be able to just shoot away.

Although the added weight of the camcorder (over the average camera) has been a problem for Matt at times, its portability is a strong asset. Matt has learned to put it down when necessary or use a tripod. The only other accessories we've found helpful are a remote start-stop switch and a line to connect the camcorder to a monitor or television. The latter gives you, in effect, a second VCR, albeit just for playback since it lacks a tuner.

Second, become familiar with your equipment ahead of time. We were well into our third production before we realized we had a "quick review" function on our camcorder. This button allows you to review the last four seconds of recorded material without rewinding the tape, an invaluable aid in "editing" a video in production. Without it, you may cut off some scenes too soon or allow others to go on for too long.

Third, despite your probable high expectations, be prepared for a finished product that is somewhat less than perfect. If you let your child do some of the videotaping, for example—and what fun will it be if you don't?—the picture will be shaky. And, depending on how much creative control she or he is allowed, it's bound to be more or less incoherent. It's the rare child—adult even—who can fashion a fully comprehensible audiovisual production the first time around. So try not to be too critical. The important thing is to let the child's creativity flow; with experience his or her video savvy will grow.



Roll 'em: A key scene from 'The Cocoa Code Caper,' starring mom as the magician.

GETTING STARTED

For us the do-it-yourself video bug bit when we learned that film director Steven Spielberg began by making little films at home. (Today he totes a video camera around the house, usually aimed at his young son.) So it's not surprising that Matt's first home video was a Goonies-type adventure called *The Skull Map*.

The first—and, without doubt, the most difficult—part of the project was turning Matt's story into a script. The trick is to re-define a storyline into discrete scenes, clarifying action and dialogue. In *The Skull Map* story, for example, two kids (Zack and Levi, friends Matt recruited for his cast) discover a skull with some strange markings in an abandoned, overgrown garden. Here's how it finally came out:

The Skull Map, Scene III

Action: Matt runs toward garden. Zack, in the middle of the cornstalks, at the count of 10, jumps out and yells...

Zack: Boo!

Action: Matt falls over and uncovers skull, but only Zack sees it. Zack is staring at it.

Matt: What are you doing—scaring me like that? What are you staring at anyway?

Action: Zack points at skull. Matt turns around and says...

Matt: Wow, it's a map! Cool! (while picking it up and pointing) This looks like my house and...

Zack: (interrupting) No, you turn it around and *this* is your house. The other is the vet's office.

Matt: (while following the dotted line with his fingers) So you go up through the gardens and then through here.

Levi: It's getting late and Matt's dad said to get back soon because they're going shopping. C'mon, let's go!

Action: They all run out of the garden. Matt drops the skull.

In our second effort, *Wong is White*, a ten-minute murder mystery that takes place in a "Chinese restaurant," there was

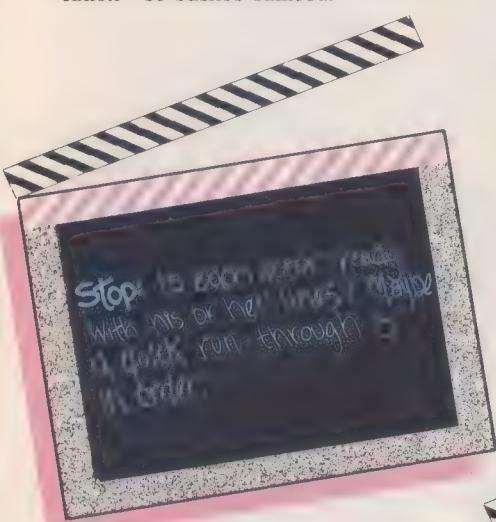
no story in advance. My husband, my son, and I sketched out the plot and scripted it as we went along. Murder mysteries have to be worked backward: from the murder itself, complete with murderer, victim, motive, method, and opportunity, back to earlier scenes that convey true clues as well as false ones. With such a complicated puzzle, in which every piece had to fit, scripting occurred as we rehearsed and taped.

One caution, however: for your own peace of mind don't let yourself fall in love with what you've written. Not only are the actors bound to make small changes in their lines, but major shifts may be dictated by problems in shooting. In *The Skull Map*,



Step one: assemble the props; step two, discuss the scene...

for example, the kids were supposed to hide in the creek, but the worst drought in decades necessitated a change in location—so bushes sufficed.



STAGING

This brings us to the staging. Sites must be selected, props assembled, and costumes put together, with the actors' help if possible. In setting a scene without a Hollywood budget, most of us have to keep in mind what's available. *Wong Is White*, for example, takes place in a Chinese restaurant because we have Oriental accessories (wall hangings, kimonos, bowls, paper lanterns). Your possessions may suggest a Mexican locale, a campground, or a toy store. Think about what you or your generous friends have before getting locked into an impossible-to-shoot idea.

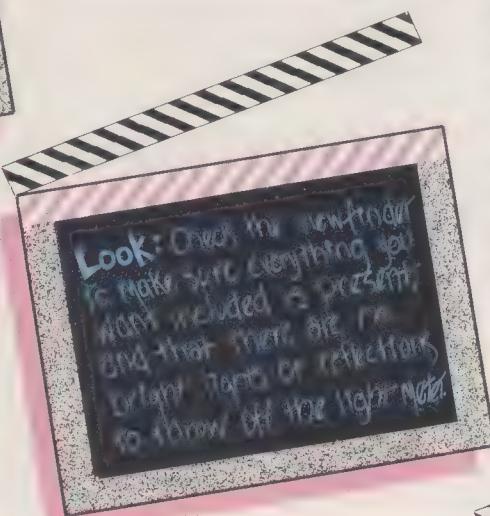
This is the time, too, to use a homemade version of a director's lens to preview each scene. Simply cut a one-and-a-half by two-inch rectangle out of a large index card and have your child look through it to assess the scene. Do you need to add anything or eliminate background clutter? What can't be removed may be hidden by the old painted-sheet-as-backdrop trick. If you keep the artwork simple and non-specific, it can be re-used in subsequent videos. Let the kids have at it—they're the best abstract expressionists around.

Think, too, about what ready-made sets you have. For our lip-synched video of the

Blues Brothers' "Soul Man," we found the garage had the right gritty atmosphere. That, plus good acoustics and plenty of elbow room, made it the perfect place to shoot this acrobatic scenario.

LET'S REHEARSE

When rehearsal time rolls around, the actors, who've been given scripts in advance, should be ready to read. A good way to iron out difficulties, such as rearranging lines to suit kids' abilities or wishes, is to read sitting around a table. You may lose their interest, however, unless you let them dig into the action soon. Take it slowly the first time through, letting ev-



eryone hold on to scripts if necessary.

The time to make director's notes on the videographer's script is during the second rehearsal. Encourage your child/director to be specific. Every detail, from shooting angle and distance to zooms, should be recorded. (For this reason, the script's margins should be ample.) Bear in mind that the videographer usually remains stationary throughout each scene's taping.

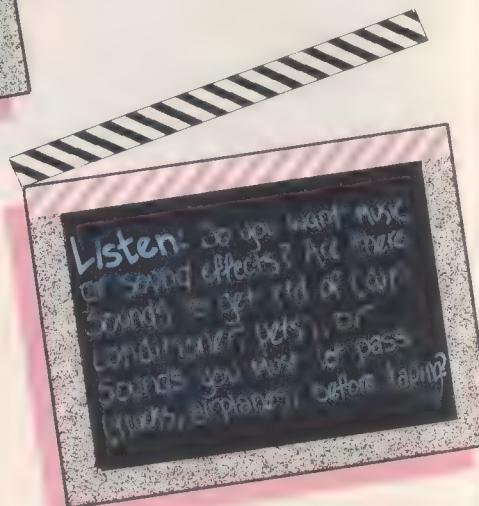
In *The Skull Map*, one scene had two kids searching on one side of a house, two searching on the other, and then the four meeting each other. At Matt's suggestion, after taping the first two kids, I paused the camera and moved to a position where I could a) tape the other two while zooming

in, b) zoom out a bit to catch them being startled by the first two, and c) zoom out further to show it was the same house all four were circling. The effect was both smooth and dramatic.

The final rehearsal—and three may well be the limit for kids this age—should bring everyone together in costume to be videotaped. Why? For one thing, it *may* go without a hitch and be your final version. More likely, it'll reveal whatever flaws have gone undetected thus far.

Our taped rehearsal of *Wong Is White* revealed videotaping errors (cutting into previous scenes) as well as plot deficiencies (insufficient motivation for one suspect). The objective here—and it's not so easy to achieve, even for professionals—is detachment. Step back and try to see this preliminary tape as an outside viewer would. Does it make sense? Does it flow well? Are the scenes too short and choppy, or too long and irrelevant? Children's work especially needs this scrutiny.

When you think you're ready for the real thing, pop a brand new tape into the camera. You not only want a work of art that's free of faulty pre-recorded material, you want the highest quality recording. Unless



you plan to edit to a final version (see "Clean Cuts," Oct. '86), you should be well prepared for taping by now.

Pausing, of course, creates the cleanest "edits," but if breaks are too long, you'll have to shut the camera off between scenes. Before you tape again, use the review button to check the last few seconds of recorded material. This way, you won't erase precious scene endings or include unwanted blank tape. Still, it's a good idea to let the camera run at the end of each scene so that it doesn't matter if the tail end is cut off.

Not surprisingly, it's this actual videotaping stage that kids find most exciting. Matt may have overdone it, but he had a

continued on page 119



Step three, choose a director; step four, rehearse.

Vision Break-through

When I put on the pair of glasses what I saw I could not believe. Nor will you.

By Joseph Sugarman

I am about to tell you a true story. If you believe me, you will be well rewarded. If you don't believe me, I will make it worth your while to change your mind. Let me explain.

Len is a friend of mine who knows good products. One day he called excited about a pair of sunglasses he owned. "It's so incredible," he said, "when you first look through a pair, you won't believe it."

"What will I see?" I asked. "What could be so incredible?"

Len continued, "When you put on these glasses, your vision improves. Objects appear sharper, more defined. Everything takes on an enhanced 3-D effect. And it's not my imagination. I just want you to see for yourself."

COULDN'T BELIEVE EYES

When I received the sunglasses and put them on I couldn't believe my eyes. I kept taking them off and putting them on to see if indeed what I was seeing was indeed actually sharper or if my imagination was playing tricks on me. But my vision improved. It was obvious. I kept putting on my \$100 pair of sunglasses and comparing them. They didn't compare. I was very impressed. Everything appeared sharper, more defined and indeed had a greater three dimensional look to it. But what did this product do that made my vision so much better? I found out.

The sunglasses (called BluBlockers) filter out the ultraviolet and blue spectrum light waves from the sun. You've often heard the color blue used for expressions of bad moods such as "blue Monday" or "I have the blues." Apparently, the color blue, for centuries, has been considered a rather depressing color.

For eyesight, blue is not a good color too. There are several reasons. First, the blue rays have one of the shortest wavelengths in the visible spectrum (red is the longest). As a result, the color blue will focus slightly in front of the retina which is the "focusing screen" in your eye. By blocking the blue from the sunlight through a special filtration process, and only letting those rays through that indeed focus clearly on the retina, objects appear to be sharper and clearer.

The second reason is even more impressive. It is harmful to have ultra-violet rays fall on our eyes. Recognized as bad



They look like sunglasses.

for skin, UV light is worse for eyes and is believed to play a role in many of today's eye diseases. In addition, people with contact lenses are at greater risk because contacts tend to magnify the light thus increasing the sun's harmful effects.

SUNGLASS DANGER

Finally, by eliminating the blue and UV light during the day, your night vision improves. The purple pigment in your eye, called Rhodopsin, is affected by blue and ultraviolet light and the eyes can take hours to recover from the damage.

But what really surprised me was the danger in conventional sunglasses. Our pupils close in bright light to limit the light entering the eye and open wider at night like the lens of an automatic camera. So when we put on sunglasses, although we reduce the amount of light that enters our eyes, our pupils open wider and we allow more of the harmful blue and ultraviolet light into our eyes.

DON'T BE CONFUSED

I'm often asked by people who read this, "Do those Blu-Blockers really work?" They really do and please give me the opportunity to prove it. I guarantee each pair of BluBlockers to perform exactly as I described.

BluBlocker sunglasses use ophthalmic-quality CR-39 lenses with a hard anti-scratch coating. Over 85 percent of all doctors' prescriptions are now filled with CR-39. No shortcuts were taken.

The black, light-weight anodized aluminum frame is one of the most comfortable I have ever worn and compares with many of the \$200 pairs you can buy from France or Italy.

The weakest link in any pair of glasses is the hinge. So there's a precision two-way tension hinge that not only bends when you close the pair, but is spring-loaded to bend outward too. You get a completely flexible frame that will comfortably contour to any size face.

There are also two other models. One is a clip-on pair that weighs less than one

ounce and fits over prescription lenses and the second is a precision-molded plastic frame that looks identical to the aluminum model but without the tension hinge. All models include a padded carrying case and a one-year limited warranty.

I urge you to order a pair and experience your improved vision. Then take your old sunglasses and compare them to the BluBlocker sunglasses. See how much clearer and sharper objects appear with the BluBlocker pair. And see if your night vision doesn't improve as a direct result. If you don't see a dramatic difference in your vision—one so noticeable that you can tell immediately, then send them back anytime within 30 days and I will send you a prompt and courteous refund.

DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE

But from what I've personally witnessed, once you wear a pair, there will be no way you'll want to return it.

Pilots, golfers, hunters, athletes and anyone who spends a great deal of time in the sun, who drives a car or who just wants to protect their vision—all will find BluBlocker sunglasses indispensable.

Our eyes are very important to us. Protect them and at the same time improve your vision with the most incredible breakthrough in sunglasses since they were first introduced. Order a pair or two at no obligation, today.

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BACK FROM THE BRINK



COMPUTER ILLUSTRATION: MICHA RISS



Home Dishes Begin To Recover From The Satellite Scrambling Fiasco

When Home Box Office began to scramble its satellite signals 18 months ago, doomsayers predicted the skies would quickly darken for the nearly two million homes that had invested in the big dishes. Not only did that fail to come true, but there are more signals available today for free than there were in 1986. In fact, home satellite reception is easier to handle, costs less than it used to, and offers more variety. For those who want to watch premium movies and other scrambled channels, there are several compet-

ing plans, much like the packages offered by cable systems.

The home dish industry hasn't fully recovered from the body blow of scrambling, but neither has it toppled. It's moved, if anywhere, far enough back from the brink of ruin to permit a new look at scrambling's impact on viewing habits and the dish industry's response. Is the field once again healthy enough to justify investments in home earth stations by video-hungry consumers?

The answer may surprise you.

On the day scrambling started,

By
Bob Angus

Home Dishes

there were about 1.8 million backyard satellite systems, worth an estimated \$5.8 billion at retail, in use in the United States. Last year, according to the Electronic Industries Association's Consumer Electronics Group, another 375,000 families joined the ranks. This year the CEG predicts another 560,000 systems, worth \$1.12 billion, will be sold. In a little over a year, the average price of a home satellite system declined from \$3,000 to \$2,000—and these lower-priced systems not only do more, but operate better and more conveniently.

Satellite Orbit, the bible of birdwatchers, lists the programs for 82 regularly-scheduled channels, 18 of which are scrambled. That number will increase by six to eight this year, estimates publisher David Walford. In addition to those 82 channels, there are another 17 unlisted channels, eight of which are scrambled, and about two dozen "occasional video" channels that are used to relay the road games of your favorite teams, the *Eyewitness News* nightly Washington report, and syndicated shows like *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Entertainment Tonight*. As if that were not enough, there are also "wild" channels: offbeat relays of sports, news, and features to Japan and Australia—and the NASA channel, which used to permit viewers to eavesdrop on space shots.

Not all these channels operate all the time. No matter how you count, however, there's been a clear gain of a dozen or more "free" channels since scrambling created the impression that free channels were on the way out. Free channels include Jerry Falwell's Liberty Broadcasting Network, the Home Shopping Network, commercial TV in Spanish from Mexico City, three PBS channels, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, several regional sports channels and sports feeds, plus such cable favorites as The Weather Channel, Bravo, First Choice Superchannel (premium movies), and music video channels.

The scrambled channels, which number more than 30, include those most familiar to cable subscribers: premium movie channels like HBO, Showtime, The Movie Channel, SelecTV, and Cinemax; basic channels like CNN, CNN Headline, superstations WGN and WTBS, and ESPN; and a couple of porn channels. While programmers are still learning how to package these channels, it is possible to subscribe to a single channel, CBN for example, for as little as \$1.25 a month, or to a package of 15 basic channels and two premium movie channels for \$23.50, about what a cable subscriber would pay for the same programs.

DECODER PROGRESS

If you're planning to subscribe, you will need a decoder. Last year, that meant \$395 for a stand-alone box built for use

with virtually all the better satellite receivers. This year, several satellite receiver makers built decoders into their new models. This not only eliminates the need for yet another video component, but also yields receivers that cost less than the combined price of the models they replaced plus their component decoders.

Houston Tracker, R.L. Drake, Channel Master, Chaparral, and M/A-Com are among the manufacturers offering so-called IRDs (integrated receiver/decoders) at prices ranging from \$1,200 to \$1,300. But remember, merely owning a decoder doesn't give you access to scrambled programs; you must have it authorized for the channels you wish to receive.



Today's satellite systems do more, operate better, are easier to use—and their prices have dropped from \$3,000 to \$2,000.

You do that by subscribing to one or more of the program services mentioned above.

Twelve hundred dollars may sound like a lot for a satellite receiver—and it is when you can simply buy a no-frills model for about \$300—but today's top-of-the-line receivers incorporate several other items that used to be stand-alone components. They include a satellite positioner, used to operate the remote-drive mechanism at the dish, a stereo audio processor, and dual C/Ku-band capability. Most or all of these extra features are available from almost any satellite receiver manufacturer for as low as \$500.

But the most expensive receivers have one feature not found on less expensive units, or even on high-end units of a year or two ago: a vastly expanded memory. They have enough memory to remember not only the position of every one of the 18 C and 4 Ku-band satellites, but also details about fine-tuning both the audio and the video on 100 or more satellite channels.

Fine tuning is necessary because the standards for satellite transmission are fewer and less rigid than those for terrestrial TV, particularly when it comes to the Ku-band. Installers hate these new units because pre-programming them is complicated and time-consuming. But once the job is done, the receivers become simple enough for a child to use.

For just that reason, most of the new "smart" receivers also have a parental lockout feature to let parents maintain control over the system's use even when they're not home. Some lockouts merely let you rule certain channels or satellites off limits. Others can be programmed to block out certain channels at specific times, or all channels during homework time. Some receivers provide an on-screen guide to help you program the satellite and channel you want to watch.

SHRINKING DISHES

While dish size is still a function of where you live—farmers in Kansas can get by with antennas significantly smaller than those needed in Oregon or New England—there's been an overall reduction in size, mass, and cost, and a consequent improvement in appearance.

For example, New Englanders used to need 12-foot antennas to properly receive all the C-band satellites. Thanks to advances in electronics, residents in the same area today can get by with ten footers. Likewise in Kansas, where most satellite signals are strongest, it's possible to view the entire spectrum with an eight-foot dish, and some viewers get by with dishes as small as six feet in diameter.

Six-footers are able to deliver about three dozen of the strongest C-band channels in an area ranging from the Appalachians to the Rockies, as well as handle Ku-band signals. But because systems that use them cost nearly as much as the systems to receive it all, they have not proven widely successful.

There's another reason why dishes look better. In the past, cheap and shoddy tended to equal ugly. Most of those manufacturers have left the business. Dish designers today pay as much attention to the appearance of their equipment as to performance. There are more black mesh reflectors which blend better with their surroundings.

Until recently, would-be dish owners in many communities faced the problem of getting the approval of local zoning boards or building inspectors to install antennas. In 1985, the Federal Communications Commission removed most of the authority of local officials to prevent dish installation. While some communities still resist, the FCC has acted even more forcefully to knock down remaining barriers to dish construction.

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VIDEO YOU CAN FEEL

Yamaha's Subwoofer Adds Boom to Your Bass



ILLUSTRATION: NORM BENDELL

BY MARK FLEISCHMANN

Exploding spaceships in *The Empire Strikes Back* make the floor rumble. The room vibrates pleasantly as the double bassists in a simulcast of the Boston Symphony saw back and forth; tympani rattle the windowpanes. You not only see and hear, but *feel* a Hi-Fi rock 'n' roll video. Those mini speakers that came with your monitor never sounded so good.

The credit for this wave of low-frequency sound goes not to some new genre of

super mini-speaker but to a unique audio product from Yamaha. The NS-W2 Natural Sound Electronic Super Woofer is the first video-ready subwoofer, a single speaker that produces only low-frequency sound. It can extend the low-frequency response of any audio/video system without impairing the performance of your TV or monitor because it is shielded especially for video use. And at \$249.95 list, it costs a lot less than a pair of high-quality loudspeakers.

The NS-W2 includes a built-in amplifier, an unusual, though not unique feature. One problem with subwoofers is power: to be audible, low-frequency sounds need to

move more air than higher-spectrum sounds and therefore pose a strain on the amplifier that feeds them. That results in weakening the level at volume peaks, when the amp is overtaxed and balks at its workload. Many subwoofer buyers face the unpleasant choice of living with clipping (overdriving their present amp), buying a more powerful amp, or not using their brand-new subwoofers.

The NS-W2's internal 40-watt amp provides all the power the unit uses without drawing away from the amp in your A/V system. Many of these—especially early ones—have low-power amps feeding

The subwoofer soundtrack subtly enhances everything from the most pristine Beta Hi-Fi to the grungiest mono linear tracks.

mini-speakers, so Yamaha's design increases compatibility. The subwoofer is most useful with small and medium speakers, provided they have relatively poor bass response. (Yamaha recommends its NS-L1 speakers).

Where you put a subwoofer once you've got one depends on the kind of viewscreen you've got. Yamaha cautions that "some types of TV may show abnormal color reproduction" when placed next to an NS-W2. (Moving the subwoofer a few inches away should solve the problem.) With most monitors and TVs, however, you can locate the subwoofer and screen near each other. I've had no problems using the NS-W2 with my Proton equipment.

You can even stack your monitor/TV and subwoofer. According to Yamaha product merchandising manager Phil Grieves, the unit "was designed at a specific width so that a monitor can be set on top of it." Wouldn't that rattle the viewscreen to death? No, he answers, "There are so many microprocessors in there, and the components are so locked down onto circuit boards that the only thing prone to vibration would be the yoke"—the delicate back of the picture tube. Even then, "in modern television design the yoke is so well isolated that you won't have a problem. Yokes get a lot more vibration in shipment than they would ever get from this kind of low-frequency output." Yamaha's manual, however, recommends against placing the unit on a bookshelf or in a cabinet that would block ventilation of the built-in amp.

Most subwoofers, including this one, disperse bass sounds widely through a room—in audio parlance, they're not highly directional. So while the NS-W2's magnetic shielding lets you put the subwoofer near the screen, you could just as easily have it clear across the room and still get roughly the same benefits.

Connecting the NS-W2 is fairly easy, though it helps to be handy with a wire stripper. If your amp has two pairs of speaker terminals (A + B), simply leave the main speakers connected to A and attach the Yamaha to B. If your amp has only one set of speaker terminals, hook the amp to the Yamaha, then connect the main speakers in parallel to the Yamaha. You can still use your regular speakers with the Yamaha's power off.



The NS-W2 is a roughly 27-pound black box measuring 17.7 x 14.2 x 12.4 inches with only two controls: a power switch and a horizontal slide control. The slider is numbered 1 through 10, with a clickstop at 5; use it to regulate volume carefully. Misuse it and you're likely to be much less enthusiastic about your new baby.

At first, I found the sound at the midpoint unsatisfying. Looking for an epiphany, I got a subtle difference. Cranking it up from 5 to 8, the sound became muddy and too bass-heavy. But the problem was not the subwoofer performing inadequately: I wasn't listening adequately. It took months of listening to Hi-Fi videotapes, LaserVision discs, LPs, CDs, and audio cassettes before I began to appreciate the NS-W2. True, during that time I heard the predictable spaceship blasts and tympani thunder that immediately reveal low-frequency power. But what matters most to me now is how the subwoofer soundtrack subtly enhances anything from the most pristine Beta Hi-Fi to the grungiest mono linear tracks. (The latter are limited more at the high end than at the low end, so an old orchestral score can actually sound much richer with the subwoofer on.)

Yamaha's Grieves says the design team "went through that same learning curve. It's just giving way to a newer way of thinking that is more sophisticated and does

work better"—better than relying on shock effects, that is. "But," he allows, "it is hard to let go of the established concepts."

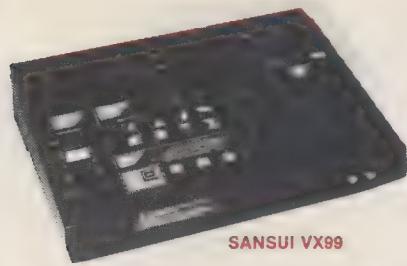
Learning to listen to a subwoofer isn't the only learning process that goes on when you get one. It doesn't take long to start noticing that you don't always agree with the way an audio engineer or producer mixed a soundtrack. When I listen to MGM/UA's digitally reconstituted *Wizard of Oz* with the subwoofer on, I go for the bass control every time the musical score goes for the kettle drums—too boomy! With the subwoofer off, hearing it as other listeners would, I marvel at its clarity and richness. The MGM/UA engineers mixed this movie for mini speakers or garden-variety bookshelf speakers operating by themselves. They didn't reckon on this video-ready subwoofer stuff.

In some cases adding a subwoofer lets—or forces—you to rethink your main speakers. My AR 38 system, a two-driver speaker (including 10-inch woofer), had gotten good reviews. I had to keep them on the floor to strengthen bass response, but their liquid-cooled tweeters were so powerful that half my records sounded piercingly trebly. The standard solution to this problem is to take the speakers off the floor, de-emphasizing both the treble and bass and leaving the midrange more room to resonate. But I didn't want to give up what little bass I had.

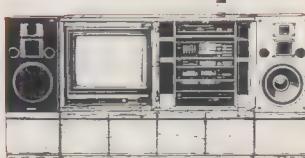
After installing the NS-W2 I realized that I didn't need the woofers in the ARs to produce low bass anymore. So I got my speakers off the floor, and for the first time, I'm completely happy with them.

The arrangement of my speaker system now resembles an inverse triangle, with the Yamaha as the bottom point. Low bass notes come mostly from the subwoofer; higher bass disperses nicely from all three speaker units. The tweeters, now at shoulder height, deliver crisp, detailed sound without undue eardrum assault. The whole set-up—with the subwoofer thrown in—is less fatiguing for long listening periods than the AR 38s alone were. Adding the Yamaha cost a lot less than replacing the ARs would have.

So if you're not happy the way your video, audio, or audio/video system sounds, don't despair. The answer may come in a little black box.



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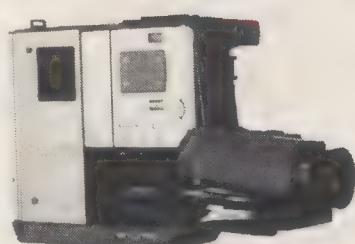
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NEWS AND VIEWS

BY MARK FLEISCHMANN

THERE IS INTELLIGENT 'LIFE ON EARTH'

David Attenborough has come to grips with samples of virtually all the world's fauna, so facing a room full of reporters is a cakewalk. One asks him to compare his BBC series, *Life on Earth*, now a four-hour Warner videocassette release, with his book of the same name. "There are only so many things you can say about the bird of paradise," he replies in a Cambridge accent. But to see it: "Natural history is the one experience that robs people of words." This naturalist, however, is never at a loss for words, gracefully narrating the eyecatching footage without ever descending into tedium or repetition. The double cassette distills 13 hours, originally produced between 1977 and 1980.

Attenborough acknowledges the superficiality of naturalist documentaries, citing a horror story about filmmakers who tried to drive lemmings off a cliff to stage a spectacular shot. The problem, he remarks dryly, was "that the animal hadn't read the book." He does admit to having staged at least one mating ritual in *Life on Earth*. "You just can't travel the desert all day looking for two scorpions."

Index signs in a corner of the screen mark off "chapters," videodisc-style, making the tapes a reference tool as well as entertainment. "We are still shackled to the idea that people will look at this only once," says Attenborough, describing the attitude inculcated by broadcast TV. "Video is going to change this."

With the videotape retailing for just



Naturalist David Attenborough during his quest for 'Life on Earth.'

\$39.95, he may be right. Warner executive Edward Bleier explains the low price by noting, "We do so well in the rental business with feature films that it's nice to do this."

VIETNAM: A FISTFUL OF VIDEOS

In the capital of a newly free nation, in a crowded public square, a man who is the George Washington of his land reads a "Declaration of Independence" mod-

eled on our own: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights." A small plane circles overhead. "When it swooped down over us," a man in the crowd of thousands later recalled, "we recognized the American flag. The crowd cheered enthusiastically."

"Ho Chi Minh was on a silver platter in 1945—we had him," states Archimedes Patti, then a U.S. intelligence agent. Ho was "first a nationalist, and second a Communist," according to Abbot Low Moffat, then of the State Department.

These provocative vignettes are in "Roots of a War," one part of a 13-hour PBS series called *Vietnam: A Television History*, now a Sony videocassette release. The full set costs \$195.95; the seven volumes are also available individually. (For information on obtaining the tapes, call 800-446-6388 or 212-315-5000.)

"The whole story is a series of wrong turns," says Stanley Karnow, a former *Time* and *Life* Indochina correspondent who helped write and prepare the series. He also wrote the companion book, *Vietnam: A History*. "You find people throughout who understood what was going on. We did have people in the State Department, for example, who were warning against getting involved [in siding with the French against the Vietnamese]." Then who was responsible? In this story, he says, "everybody's a culprit, including the American public."

The war in Vietnam has never really ended in our minds, even as it fades into history. Today, "people who weren't born at the time are taking courses on



The PBS series 'Vietnam: A Television History' aims to set the record straight.

Vietnam," says Karnow. "I have a kid in college and he's taking a course. They use the series there."

Sony has just issued five additional titles in a "Vietnam Video Collection." Another exhaustive Vietnam treatment is Embassy's 13-volume *The Ten Thousand Day War*. The granddaddy of Vietnam documentaries, however, is Emile de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig* (MPI), which heavily influenced Peter Davis' Oscar-winning *Hearts and Minds* (Embassy). MPI offers other Vietnam titles, including *The War at Home*, which charts the history of anti-war activism at the University of Wisconsin. *The Secret Agent* relates the sad history of Agent Orange and its present-day effects on Vietnam vets.

Most fictional films on the war—e.g., *Apocalypse Now* (Paramount) and *The Deer Hunter* (MCA)—are not big on historical veracity. However, many vets have said *Platoon* tells it like it was for them. Oliver Stone's beautiful, frightening movie is the first directed by someone who was in Vietnam. Vestron will release the videotape this summer.

If you can stand the clammy feeling of *deja vu*, you might pair off *Platoon* some sultry evening with one last documentary, an uncharacteristically serious Rhino release: *Destination Nicaragua*.

BROADCAST IS NOT 'TV'

The time has come to stop dignifying broadcast television by referring to it merely as "television." Why should broadcasters have exclusive use of the term? There was a time when broadcast TV was the only television available, but that was long ago. Since then, viewer options have multiplied. First came cable, then cassette and disc. Yet people persist in saying, "I saw it on TV" when they're referring to broadcast TV.

The rise of video has dealt a well-deserved blow to CBS, NBC, and ABC, which for decades have afflicted the public with lobotomized entertainment and watered-down news. Their viewer shares shrink as our alternatives expand, and I say: swell. Let's give credit where credit is due. Video is television too.

SCANLINES

Newsreels were the audio-visual journalism of yesteryear. Embassy delivers a hunk of vintage reels from the *March of Time* series, originally produced between 1936 and 1951. The full six-volume set, entitled *American Lifestyles*, is \$149.70; volumes are also available separately at \$24.95 each.

Paul Bartel and Mary Woronov reprise their celebrated roles as Paul and Mary Bland (*Eating Raoul*) in Lightning's *Chopping Mall*—not, unfortunately, directed by Bartel.



Three nostalgic scenes from 'The March of Time' show America in its myriad aspects.

The welcome resurgence of the RKO label brings new releases from the venerable studio, including trios of Cary Grant (*Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*) and John Wayne (*Back to Bataan*) titles at a sweet \$19.95 each.

The Kitchen, a major Manhattan performance-art space, showcases performances by Philip Glass, David Byrne, Laurie Anderson, and others in *The Kitchen Presents Two-Moon July* from Pacific Arts. PA also offers *Salvador Dali: A Soft-Self Portrait*.



Reviews

FILMS PRODUCED FOR THEATERS



Rick Moranis confronts the ravenous Audrey II in 'Little Shop of Horrors.'

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

1986. Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene, Steve Martin, Vincent Gardenia; dir. Frank Oz. 93m. (PG-13) *Hi St cc* \$89.95. *LV CX St* \$34.98. Warner. Image: good.

It's 10 p.m.: Do you know what your houseplants are up to? If they're anything like Audrey II, the Venus Flytrap from outer space with a heart of solid gold soul, they're probably making a snack of the next-door neighbors.

What might seem to the squeamish a totally disgusting concept is actually the core of the most enjoyable cult-destined movie musical since *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. It's easy to imagine legions of lookalike Audrey bimbettes wearing push-up bras and epoxy-coated blonde wigs, nerdy Seymours—the unlikely hero of this frivolous fable—and a crop of Audrey IIs, the self-styled "mean, green mother from outer space."

Muppet-master Frank Oz's delicious fusion of animatronics and doo-wop is based more on the hit off-Broadway play

than on Roger Corman's original 1960 low-budget film classic (now available in both black & white and colorized video versions). The plot, a mere framework for the show-stopping tunes, focuses on hapless, girlfriendless Seymour Krelborn (Moranis) who, after a solar eclipse, acquires a unique plant. By displaying "Audrey II" (named in honor of Seymour's dream girl) in the window of Mushnik's skid row flower shop, Krelborn causes business to boom.

Unfortunately, he soon discovers a problem: Audrey II only flourishes when nourished with human blood. Fortunately, at least one of the plant's victims deserves his fate—Audrey's sadistic dentist boyfriend, played to the molars by a bewigged and black-leather-clad Steve Martin. His spirited rendition of the rock'n'rolling tune "Dentist!" is brilliant, and an encounter with a masochistic patient (Bill Murray) comes close to matching the glory of the original scene, which featured a young Jack Nicholson. As the

plant prospers, its cries of "Feed me!" grow louder, and with soul legend Levi Stubbs doing the powerful vocalizing, we know it's not kidding around.

Little Shop of Horrors works so well because every element is executed with care and obvious affection. The characterizations are inspired, from the girl-group trio—Chiffon, Crystal, and Ronette—who offer a Greek chorus of cool, through the stellar lineup of guests (which also includes Jim Belushi, John Candy, and Christopher Guest), right up to Ellen Greene as Audrey and Vincent Gardenia as the apoplectic Mushnik. Don't be surprised to find yourself whistling "Suddenly Seymour" while making sure crabgrass is the only unwelcome visitor to your garden.

—Toby Goldstein

SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT

1986. Tracy Camila Johns, Redmond Hicks, John Canada Terrell, Spike Lee; pr./wr./dir. Lee. 84m. (R) *Hi St cc* \$79.98. Key. Image: good.

You gotta have *She's Gotta Have It*, the low-budget, highly comic love round-robin, a freshness explosion unlike far more lavish Hollywood garbage. The episodic story of Nola Darling (Johns)—a layout artist who'll seemingly lay out for anyone but refuses to commit to any of her panting suitors—radiates an offhand humor that's as irresistible as Nola herself. And no wonder she won't commit; her three amigos are enough to make any woman turn celibate. One is a genial Mr. Right who brutally rapes her when he gets mad. Another is a narcissistic *GQ* model who barely has any love left once he's done with his mirror. And the third is the diminutive Mars, played by filmmaker Lee as a jive-talking geek.

Lee is a kinetic screen presence as well as a confident, inventive directorial talent. Some of his devices, which might otherwise elicit groans, are used so win-

ningly they almost seem original. Characters talk directly to the screen, but since their patter isn't self-consciously cute, and the film does hinge on their conflicting views, the technique makes a lot of sense. Lee's unpretentiousness has a way of superceding the gimmicks.

His judgment misfires only a couple of times. When one of Nola's boyfriends brings her to see a dance duet he's arranged for her birthday, you cringe from the icky-poo sweetness of it. (The sudden shift to color photography makes the scene even more jarring.) And though he contributes a moody, flavorful jazz score, Spike's father is amateurish in a brief role as Nola's dad.

But, for the most part, the love talk rings truer than life, and Mars' pleading repetitions ("Please baby please baby please baby baby baby please") sound like the eager catchwords of a new generation. *She's Gotta Have It* is a sassy riff on the lengths to which people will go to possess each other. "You so fine, baby," one of Nola's suitors says at one point, "I'd drink a tub of your bathwater."

—Michael Musto

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

1985. *Helena Bonham Carter, Maggie Smith, Julian Sands; dir. James Ivory. 117m. Hi St cc \$79.98. CBS/Fox. Image: good.*

In this modern world in which we live in (to paraphrase Paul McCartney), every room with a TV screen is a room with a view. During the latter half of the 19th Century, however, the world might not have revealed its secrets to a young, British aristocrat until her first trip abroad. Such is the case with the lovely, sensitive, and proper Lucy Honeychurch (Bonham Carter), whose life experience is broadened in many ways during a visit to Florence, accompanied by an overprotective spinster cousin (Smith). Lucy's eyes are also opened—metaphorically—to the revelations of romance by the also lovely and sensitive George Emerson (Sands).

Back in the English countryside where her family lives, Lucy becomes engaged to Cecil (Daniel Day Lewis), an aristocratic, bookish dandy. Director Ivory presents him in dark interiors that contrast with the sunny exteriors framing Lucy and George, who re-enters the picture when his father moves into the neighborhood. Lucy's choice isn't as simple as one would think. Propriety clashes with instinct, big money with little, leisure with labor, and real life with art.

At first blush, this detailed and well-acted adaptation of E. M. Forster's novel would seem to be prissy fantasy, a condensed *Masterpiece Theatre* epic with a

pat and simple moral. Subsequent viewings, however, reveal how Forster's subthemes of intellect and money are subtly interwoven with the broader notions of romance and sentiment. The film may be a seductive tearjerker, but it's not a dumb one; the affirmation of life and love is properly inspirational.

A Room with a View also works well on the small screen, particularly when it returns to England. Bonham Carter's fabulous brown hair seems to reflect society's demands in its various settings, but her eyebrows become seismographic indicators of the real emotions working beneath the surface. —Richard Gehr

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

1986. *William Hurt, Marlee Matlin, Piper Laurie, Philip Bosco; dir. Randa Haines. 119m. (R) Hi cc \$79.95. Paramount. Image: good.*

Jim (Hurt) is a bright, handsome, unorthodox teacher of the hearing-impaired. He goes for a swim fully dressed, falls out of his chair to get the attention of his class, and teaches his students how to dance and sing. Sarah (Matlin) is beautiful, intelligent, and angry. She cleans latrines for a living, refuses to leave her high school (where she now works), and fights with almost everyone.

Sarah is also completely deaf, and *Children of a Lesser God* is the story of how she and Jim fall in love and deal with her affliction and his needs. It is a love story like many others: there is early attraction and antagonism, failed attempts at communication, a first date and argument. Then love blossoms, followed by fights and a separation.

What provides the passion, however,

are the central figures and their unique relationship. He loves her, but what does that love mean? Pity? Change? Union? Loss of identity? She is frightened—not only of him, but of the world. "Don't do anything you can't do well," she tells him in sign language. She lives in fear; he travels with hope.

What could have been cloying—*To Sir with Love* for the deaf—receives wit, beauty, and believability from Hurt and Matlin. Jim is personable, committed, and flawed; Sarah evokes a range of emotions with only her eyes and hands. She speaks just once, to heart-wrenching effect. This actress, partially deaf in real life, is a joy.

She is not, however, an anomaly, as *Children of a Lesser God* reveals through its celebration of the energy, happiness, and *normality* of the deaf. To see a room full of hearing-impaired students dancing and singing to "Jump (For My Love)" is almost as exhilarating as the central story itself—an uplifting tale of stubbornness, fear, anger, and, most of all, love.

—Tom Soter

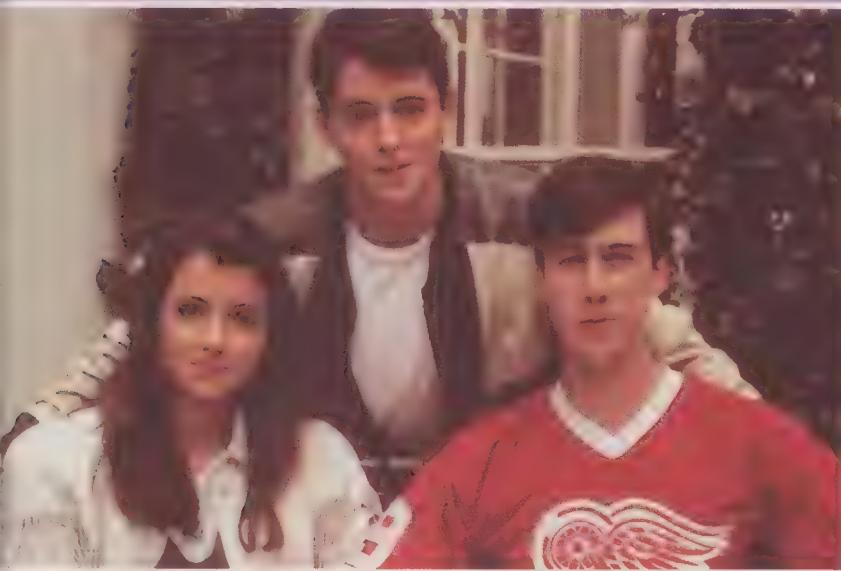
VAGABOND

1985. *Sandrine Bonnaire, Macha Meril, Yolande Moreau, Stephane Freiss; dir. Agnes Varda. 105m. sub. \$79.95. Pacific Arts. Image: good.*

Even amidst the recent spate of movies that explore despair and suffering, this determinedly enigmatic French film makes for a grippingly unhappy viewing experience. Unlike the garish cesspool of *Sid & Nancy*, the bewildering dementia of *Blue Velvet*, or *Salvador* and *Platoon*'s depictions of war's numbing amorality, *Vagabond* is the most disturbing portrait of loneliness and alienation since *Last*



Sandrine Bonnaire (right) plays an aloof drifter who dooms herself in 'Vagabond.'



Matthew Broderick (center) and his two best buddies play hooky in *'Ferris Bueller's Day Off.'*

Tango in Paris.

The opening/ending—the body of a shabbily-dressed young woman is discovered in a rural ditch, evidently a victim of exposure—sets up the sketchy story of a staunchly solitary drifter's casual downward slide. Her activities consist of hitchhiking, doing odd jobs, sleeping in a pup tent, hustling people, and wandering aimlessly through the French countryside. The oddly, remarkably beautiful Sandrine Bonnaire, extraordinary in *A Nos Amours*, provides further evidence of her dramatic talent in *Vagabond's* only major role. This bewildering character is a solipsistic believer in freedom and non-dependence at all costs. Like a black hole, Mona sucks up people's emotions and expectations, leaving them unsettled, unrewarded, and disillusioned.

A series of encounters with interrelated characters is recounted through normal narrative action and face-the-camera testimony by the bewildered casualties. Mona's atavistic self-sufficiency proves irresistible to the people she meets, yet their offers of comfort and stability—the promise of an easier but more confining existence—hold no appeal. She consciously and steadfastly resists involvement on any but the most casual level; whether intentionally or not, all of her decisions are self-destructive.

Director Varda uses this bleak tale to explore the dialectics of independence and loneliness, friendship and obligation, poverty and purity. No conclusions are drawn and Mona's death is less a warning than an observation—the unsurprising end to a life spent avoiding the benefits and hazards of socialization. With neither apology nor optimism, *Vagabond* out-

lines in stark relief some of the tragic choices we all must make about our lives.

—Ira Robbins

FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF

1986. *Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck, Mia Sara; wr./dir. John Hughes. 103m. (PG-13) Hi \$79.95. LV \$29.95. Paramount. Image: excel.*

Over 50 years ago, the Little Rascals extolled the virtues of playing hooky in sublimely nonsensical two-reelers. So what does John Hughes, celebrated contemporary chronicler of teen mores, have to add on the subject? Zip. This listless ode to the pleasures of truancy is milder and less subversive than any of the antics devised by Spanky and his gang.

Young Ferris Bueller seems likely to be remembered as one of the most obnoxious "heroes" in screen history. Broderick plays him as a smart-alecky suburban high school senior with a mission: first, con his gullible parents into believing he's too sick for school, then recruit bland girlfriend Sloane (Sara) and shy buddy Cameron (Ruck) for hijinks in downtown Chicago. Ferris pulls it all off with the kind of cocky panache that leaves his peers in admiring awe. But those not beguiled by his sparkling smile and smooth patter, often directed at the camera, may simply find the twerp insufferably smug.

Hughes has the makings of a decent tall tale: imagine the possibilities raised by three temporary delinquents on the loose in a "borrowed" vintage Ferrari! Instead, they engage in tame pursuits, lunching at a pricey eatery, attending a Cubs game, visiting the art museum, and taking part in a parade. What rebels!

Facilitating this slight plot is Hughes' standard presumption that most adults are morons, whether well-meaning or comically pompous. Unfortunately, the potshots at authorities lack any real zing. The kids, on the other hand, possess a noble streak that's been extinguished in their elders. Indeed, the real purpose of Ferris' lark is to encourage Cameron, a timid hypochondriac oppressed by his hard-hearted, materialistic father.

Scattered images—the excruciating boredom of class, Richard Edson's bent parking-lot attendant, Charlie Sheen's surly punk—testify to Hughes' comic gifts, but they're few and far between. Falling between his goofier efforts (*Weird Science*) and more serious outings (*Pretty in Pink*), *Ferris Bueller* lacks the yucks or the insights to satisfy on either count. Buckwheat and Alfalfa could've taught that Bueller brat a thing or two about having fun, that's for sure.

—Jon Young

52 PICKUP

1986. *Roy Scheider, Ann-Margret, John Glover, Robert Trevor; dir. John Frankenheimer. 111m. (R) \$79.95. Media. Image: good.*

52 Pickup was not conceived as a contender for Best Picture honors. Nor did its producers envision the monster income of a *Star Wars* or *Ghostbusters*. The enterprise behind this film was more in keeping with the plots of potboilers by Elmore Leonard—a modest heist, well-planned and economically performed. Not much flash. A recognition that if one is careful and sticks to the odds, the chance of a payoff is maximized.

So, in translating the similarly-titled Leonard novel to the screen, the producers played it smart, not fast and loose. They picked reliable Roy Scheider as the lead, steady John Frankenheimer to direct, and a rock-solid supporting cast, led by the estimable Ann-Margret and a trio of superb character actors to portray the criminal element. Dutch Leonard himself co-wrote the screenplay. As a result, what once might have been a great "B" movie is now the perfect rent-a-video.

The plot is a throwaway: a blackmail scheme by small-time hoods gets out of control, and victim Scheider is forced to take matters into his own hands. But there are no Rambo tactics here. Events proceed in a cool fashion, with shocks provided by the villains' plodding ruthlessness. The delights are provided by delicious attention to detail. For example, when the blackmailers show Scheider the video they've shot of his extramarital transgressions, we see not only the TV monitor screening the low-

rent motel rendezvous, but a glimmering reflection of the stunned victim. It's all very affecting.

That's the high point of Scheider's low-key work; too much of his acting borders on the soporific. But the rest of the cast shines, particularly John Glover, Clarence Williams III (yes, the *Mod Squad* grad), and Robert Trevor as the sleazy lowlifes who torment our hero. Ann-Margret does fine and looks great as the wronged wife whose troubles are only beginning.

High on atmosphere and characterization and always absorbing, *52 Pickup* kills a couple of hours much better than solitaire. That might not sound like a lot, but in a world of cheap promises and casual swindles, something that keeps its word deserves respect and attention. Long after the clamor for glitzier video releases subsides, this one will still be in demand.

—Steven Levy

PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED
1986. *Kathleen Turner, Nicolas Cage; dir. Francis Coppola. 103m. (PG-13) Hi St cc \$89.98. CBS/Fox. Image: good.*

Peggy Sue Got Married offers Kathleen Turner as a 43-year-old accidentally returned to being 18 and on the eve of an unhappy marriage. She wants to go Back to the Future—preferably unmarried—in this now-familiar time-travel plot. *Peggy Sue* renovates the repressive '50s into the fabulous '50s without, as the title implies, challenging the inevitability of monogamy.

Golden sunlight flickers over Turner and Cage as they ride in his nifty convertible. The period cars, furniture, clothes,

and taboos are all accurate. Yet something's awry here. *Peggy Sue* fulfills its titular destiny, but reluctantly. Turner and Cage seem ready to break out of the pre-fab premise and turn it into a different movie—she with her husky-voiced womanliness, he with his rigorously one-dimensional smarm, a kind of zen obtuseness that calls attention to his brilliant impersonation of the perfect young Narcissus.

They're so good that you wait and wait for a searing moment of recognition, an acknowledgment that we are all fellow travelers stuck in the youth ghetto of our increasingly conservative pop culture. But Coppola undercuts them with a different message: *See this pretty scene! How nicely I've composed it! Weren't the '50s swell?* *Peggy Sue* gets married.

If you can thrive on that weird creative tension, enjoy. For me, though, *Peggy Sue* is the dark underside of *It Happened One Night*, another movie about consummation. In Frank Capra's film, the resolution is exhilarating. Coppola's is merely depressing. Welcome to the sexual counterrevolution. Ever had the feeling you'd been swindled? —Mark Fleischmann

NOTHING IN COMMON

1986. *Tom Hanks, Jackie Gleason, Eva Marie Saint; dir. Garry Marshall. 119m. (PG) Hi cc \$89.95. HBO/Cannon. Image: good.*

Do you remember the episode of *Bosom Buddies* where Tom Hanks' parents split up and he suddenly matures into a marriage counselor? Well, this is the movie version, with enough budget to hire Jackie Gleason and Eva Marie Saint

to play the parents and the time to get really serious about marital disorders.

Garry Marshall has enjoyed a very successful career based on being nice. Whether it's the Fonz, Laverne and Shirley, or Hanks' Dave Basner, Marshall's protagonists have always had to reconcile demands of the real world with the moral need to do the nice thing. In *The Flamingo Kid*, Marshall showed Matt Dillon torn between his old man's nice values and the cutthroat glitter of would-be role model Richard Crenna. But *Nothing in Common's* conflict is mostly internal as Basner tries to reconcile his own character in terms of his newly-separated father's.

That's where the film first staggers. The joke of the title is that they, of course, have a lot in common: the young hot-shot advertising executive is every bit the gib womanizer that his salesman father ostensibly was. Unfortunately, the camera focuses on Hanks for nearly the first hour, offering little more than a peek at pa. By the time Gleason appears, as a dour Willy Loman-type, you can't really believe the garrulous Hanks is any relation. Plot pivots that should function in the wink of an eye turn into long-winded explanations about the nature of personality conflict and heredity. The effect in this overlong undertaking is that of a lead-bottomed wobble toy that can't right itself.

Gleason acts as if the meter were running every moment he's on screen, and Saint is pleasant but predictable as a confused nouveau divorcee. Hector Elizondo and Bess Armstrong are rarely less than rock steady as Dave's fatherly boss and motherly ex-girlfriend. And Hanks is Hanks: not a mean bone and always on (except when the formula dictates the predictable break-under-pressure). Ultimately, *Nothing in Common* is the embodiment of its star: impossible to dislike but more than a wee bit exasperating.

—John Walker

TRUE STORIES

1986. *David Byrne, Swoosie Kurtz, Spalding Gray, Annie McEnroe; co-wr./dir. Byrne. 89m. (PG) cc Hi St \$79.95. Warner. Image: excel.*

A stranger comes to the fictional town of Virgil, Texas, on the eve of its "Celebration of Specialness." In a rambling narrative, the gawky, curious man (Byrne) explains how the town's people are special: there's one woman who always lies, another who is obsessed with cuteness, a third who, out of sheer laziness, hasn't left her bed for years. There are also a happily married couple who don't speak to each other and a sad man who's taken to advertising on television



Tom Hanks and Jackie Gleason discuss their similarities in 'Nothing in Common.'

for a wife. Another young man reads psyches with the "radio" in his head; a local mystic changes fortunes with his voodoo chants. The stranger meets these characters as he wanders through town, admiring its beauty and simplicity. And they take him in, unaware that he's observing them like an entomologist would an insect.

As he showed on early Talking Heads albums, Byrne has love and *hate* for modern technology, and for the quaint and backward way some people live. His off-kilter attitude makes for some very funny situations. In one sequence, the town's civic leader (Gray) turns a family dinner into a lecture on industrial development, using food as models for roads and buildings. Byrne does condescend, but when he mentions that he "had something to say about the difference between American and European cities...but I forgot what it was," he undercuts his own snobbery.

The plot—a series of vignettes in which oddball characters haphazardly collide—has a pleasant laziness about it. There's no rush to reach a climactic moment; while there is an ending, it could easily have been totally different. The musical sequences are, for the most part, traditional, generally advancing the plot or our understanding of the characters.

One of the tape's few weak points is that shots with beautiful expanses of sky and land are oddly claustrophobic on the small screen. But Byrne's study of a small town caught in the throes of industrialization remains both sad and oddly hilarious.

—Adam Philips



David Byrne contemplates the nature of small-town Americana in 'True Stories.'

eligible for a full scholarship reserved for blacks.

If super-suntan tablets were all there was to it, this might be a kind of racial *Tootsie*, with our hero learning how to be human by getting—literally—into somebody else's skin. But *Soul Man* can only work as social commentary if you believe that Mark, whose intelligence is always assumed but never demonstrated, would have no competition from real blacks.

Following its initial ethical gaffe, *Soul Man* strives to criticize racism rather than remain embroiled in it. At times, stereotyping becomes the brunt of the

ordeal with renewed determination to expand his obscene wealth.

In *Mosquito Coast*, Harrison Ford plays a similar role—*inventor Allie Fox*. Fed up with the decadence of contemporary American culture and its lack of appreciation for his genius, Fox moves his family to an uncharted South American town on a mission to bring the natives ice. His wife (Mirren as Donald) and kids (Huey, Dewey, and Louie) cooperate in his hare-brained scheme, only gradually realizing what a megalomaniac he is.

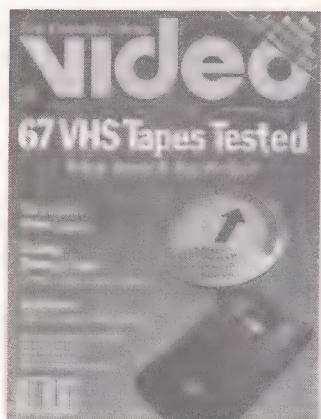
The Mosquito Coast has a promising premise. Allie Fox, a larger-than-life figure, achievements tested, is also potent Paul Schrader's *l*. We know from ambition and arro *m*, and he never of introspection to *ves*. *The Mosquito Coast* has a voice of reason, lunatic the truth *dreams*. The only lie Fox is himself, so that spells his

mirable performance. Harisma and energy are impressive in *l* a thankless role. Son, seems lost in the *cockchuck* manual. *phy* and the score but *The Mosquito Coast* as its main characters knew how to find humor to his

—Louis Kesten

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Bill me later

rent motel rendezvous, but a glimmering reflection of the stunned victim. It's all very affecting.

That's the high point of Scheider's low-key work; too much of his acting borders on the soporific. But the rest of the cast shines, particularly John Glover, Clarence Williams III (yes, the *Mod Squad* grad), and Robert Trevor as the sleazy lowlifes who torment our hero. Ann Margret does fine and looks great as the wronged wife whose troubles are only beginning.

High on atmosphere and characterization and always absorbing, *52 Pickup* kills a couple of hours much better than solitaire. That might not sound like a lot, but in a world of cheap promises and casual swindles, something that keeps its word deserves respect and attention. Long after the clamor for glitzier video releases subsides, this one will still be in demand.

—Steven Levy

PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED

1986. *Kathleen Turner, Nicolas Cage; dir. Francis Coppola. 103m. (PG-13) Hi St cc \$89.98. CBS/Fox. Image: good.*

Peggy Sue Got Married offers Kathleen Turner as a 43-year-old accidentally returned to being 18 and on the eve of an unhappy marriage. She wants to go Back to the Future—preferably unmarried—in this now-familiar time-travel plot. *Peggy Sue* renovates the repressive '50s into the fabulous '50s without, as the title implies, challenging the inevitability of monogamy.

Golden sunlight flickers over Turner and Cage as they ride in his nifty convertible. The period cars, furniture, clothes,

and taboos are all accurate. Yet something's awry here. *Peggy Sue* fulfills its titular destiny, but reluctantly. Turner and Cage seem ready to break out of the pre-fab premise and turn it into a different movie—she with her husky-voiced womanliness, he with his rigorously one-dimensional smarm, a kind of zen obtuseness that calls attention to his brilliant impersonation of the perfect young Narcissus.

They're so good that you wait and wait for a searing moment of recognition, an acknowledgment that we are all fellow travelers stuck in the youth ghetto of our increasingly conservative pop culture. But Coppola undercuts them with a different message: *See this pretty scene! How nicely I've composed it! Weren't the '50s swell?* *Peggy Sue* gets married.

If you can thrive on that weird creative tension, enjoy. For me, though, *Peggy Sue* is the dark underside of *It Happened One Night*, another movie about consummation. In Frank Capra's film, the resolution is exhilarating. Coppola's is merely depressing. Welcome to the sexual counterrevolution. Ever had the feeling you'd been swindled? —Mark Fleischmann

NOTHING IN COMMON

1986. *Tom Hanks, Jackie Gleason, Eva Marie Saint; dir. Garry Marshall. 119m. (PG) Hi cc \$89.95. HBO/Cannon. Image: good.*

Do you remember the episode of *Bosom Buddies* where Tom Hanks' parents split up and he suddenly matures into a marriage counselor? Well, this is the movie version, with enough budget to hire Jackie Gleason and Eva Marie Saint

to play the parents and the time to get really serious about marital disorders.

Garry Marshall has enjoyed a very successful career based on being nice. Whether it's the Fonz, Laverne and Shirley, or Hanks' Dave Basner, Marshall's protagonists have always had to reconcile demands of the real world with the moral need to do the nice thing. In *The Flamingo Kid*, Marshall showed Matt Dillon torn between his old man's nice values and the cutthroat glitter of would-be role model Richard Crenna. But *Nothing in Common's* conflict is mostly internal as Basner tries to reconcile his own character in terms of his newly-separated father's.

That's where the film first staggers. The joke of the title is that they, of course, have a lot in common: the young hot-shot advertising executive is every bit the glib womanizer that his salesman father ostensibly was. Unfortunately, the camera focuses on Hanks for nearly the first hour, offering little more than a peek at pa. By the time Gleason appears, as a dour Willy Loman-type, you can't really believe the garrulous Hanks is any relation. Plot pivots that should function in the wink of an eye turn into long-winded explanations about the nature of personality conflict and heredity. The effect in this overlong undertaking is that of a lead-bottomed wobble toy that can't right itself.

Gleason acts as if the meter were running every moment he's on screen, and Saint is pleasant but predictable as a confused nouveau divorcee. Hector Elizondo and Bess Armstrong are rarely less than rock steady as Dave's fatherly boss and motherly ex-girlfriend. And Hanks is



Tom Hanks and

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for a wife. Another young man reads psyches with the "radio" in his head; a local mystic changes fortunes with his voodoo chants. The stranger meets these characters as he wanders through town, admiring its beauty and simplicity. And they take him in, unaware that he's observing them like an entomologist would an insect.

As he showed on early Talking Heads albums, Byrne has love and *hate* for modern technology, and for the quaint and backward way some people live. His off-kilter attitude makes for some very funny situations. In one sequence, the town's civic leader (Gray) turns a family dinner into a lecture on industrial development, using food as models for roads and buildings. Byrne does condescend, but when he mentions that he "had something to say about the difference between American and European cities...but I forgot what it was," he undercuts his own snobbery.

The plot—a series of vignettes in which oddball characters haphazardly collide—has a pleasant laziness about it. There's no rush to reach a climactic moment; while there is an ending, it could easily have been totally different. The musical sequences are, for the most part, traditional, generally advancing the plot or our understanding of the characters.

One of the tape's few weak points is that shots with beautiful expanses of sky and land are oddly claustrophobic on the small screen. But Byrne's study of a small town caught in the throes of industrialization remains both sad and oddly hilarious.

—Adam Philips



David Byrne contemplates the nature of small-town Americana in 'True Stories.'

eligible for a full scholarship reserved for blacks.

If super-suntan tablets were all there was to it, this might be a kind of racial *Tootsie*, with our hero learning how to be human by getting—literally—into somebody else's skin. But *Soul Man* can only work as social commentary if you believe that Mark, whose intelligence is always assumed but never demonstrated, would have no competition from real blacks.

Following its initial ethical gaffe, *Soul Man* strives to criticize racism rather than remain embroiled in it. At times, stereotyping becomes the brunt of the joke rather than its governing principle. The comic highlights are a basketball game in which the bumbling, hot-dogging Mark makes a cultural spectacle of himself, and a stiff dinner party at which everyone's racial fantasies run wild.

—Ed Sikov

THE MOSQUITO COAST

1986. Harrison Ford, Helen Mirren, River Phoenix; dir. Peter Weir. 118m. (PG) Hi St cc \$89.95. LV CX St cc \$39.98. Warner. Image: excel.

Three well-educated friends with whom I watched *The Mosquito Coast* duly pointed out its similarity to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. I, however, was reminded more of plots from *Uncle Scrooge* comic books. Writer/illustrator Carl Barks sent Scrooge McDuck, along with his nephew Donald, and grand-nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie, off to various Third World backwaters in search of rare gems. Scrooge usually paid dearly for his greed and arrogance but emerged from each

ordeal with renewed determination to expand his obscene wealth.

In *Mosquito Coast*, Harrison Ford plays a similar role—*inventor Allie Fox*. Fed up with the decadence of contemporary American culture and its lack of appreciation for his genius, Fox moves his family to an uncharted South American town on a mission to bring the natives ice. His wife (Mirren as Donald) and kids (Huey, Dewey, and Louie) cooperate in his hare-brained scheme, only gradually realizing what a megalomaniac he is.

The Mosquito Coast has a promising premise. Allie Fox, a larger-than-life figure whose considerable achievements are all wrongly motivated, is also potentially fascinating. But Paul Schrader's screenplay goes awry. We know from the start that Fox's ambition and arrogance will destroy him, and he never takes even a moment of introspection to question his own motives. *The Mosquito Coast* desperately needs a voice of reason, someone to tell this lunatic the truth about his overblown dreams. The only thing that can stop Allie Fox is himself, and his inability to do that spells his doom.

Ford turns in an admirable performance, filling Fox with charisma and energy. Mirren, who has been impressive in the past, is trapped in a thankless role. Phoenix, as Fox's oldest son, seems lost without his Junior Woodchuck manual. Both the cinematography and the score are lush and gorgeous, but *The Mosquito Coast* is as infuriating as its main character. At least Carl Barks knew how to add some suspense and humor to his morality plays.

—Louis Kesten

SOUL MAN

1986. C. Thomas Howell, Rae Dawn Chong, James Earl Jones, James B. Sikking; dir. Steve Miner. 101m. (PG-13) Hi St cc \$79.95. New World. Image: good.

When *Soul Man* hit the big screen, it was accused of being tacky and racist. Not so, said its director, *Soul Man* was about racism. The tale of a rich white guy who finances his Harvard Law School education by masquerading as black is in fact a semi-comedy about bigotry's effect on several reasonably bright future lawyers. It's also at times both tacky and racist, though the latter results more from mindlessness than overt prejudice.

To enjoy *Soul Man*, you have to buy a bizarre premise. Mark Watson (Howell), the only child of a fabulously wealthy screwball (Sikking), is accepted to Harvard; unfortunately, Dad refuses to pay his tuition. Mark's cavalier attitude has already nipped his credit rating in the bud, so his only (?) choice is to take pills that color his skin and thus make him

VIDEOS MADE FOR HOME VIEWING



GUNTER GEBEL-WILLIAMS, a tiger trainer who also works with horses, elephants and wolfhounds, leads the parade in the 'Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Video.'

RINGLING BROTHERS AND BARNUM & BAILEY HOME VIDEO

1987. Pr. Don Spielvogel. 110m. Hi St cc \$89.95. Family. Image: good.

Part of growing up is realizing that your parents took you to the circus in part because the experience is a lot more amazing to adults. The acts seem more death-defying once you're old enough to know all there is to fear, the clowns are funnier when you understand the context of their sight gags, and the animal acts become completely astounding once one has unsuccessfully tried to teach a recalcitrant dog to fetch. So it's not for nothing that the ringmaster opens each performance with the chant, "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages!" The adults are invariably the widest-eyed kids in the stands.

And what a collection of acts to be wide-eyed about. Discounting the "Living Unicorn," the wonderful 155th edition of RB&B stars on video lots of animals, aerialists, acrobats, and a motorcycle act that rides around in a steel cage. The most famous act—Gunther Gebel-Williams, the tiger trainer who also works with horses, elephants, and Russian wolfhounds—never disappoints. Thanks to video, one sees exactly how big the big cats are. Another astounding

act is Eric Braun's lengthy clown skit with a trained dog.

All this talent is presented in the sincerely hokey style the circus demands. Two of the Braun children follow their "Uncle Tim" in a search for the unicorn and, by chance of course, bump into the various acts just before they perform. Ringmaster Kenneth Antekeier provides short and interesting commentary at the right moments, always striking the right "greatest show on earth" tone. The video could have included more close-ups, but by and large it meets the three-ring challenge, zeroing in on the most interesting ring at any given moment.

So, for children of all ages, this tape is the next best thing to smelling the sawdust. Circus lovers had better get with it—this tape will be withdrawn after a year, when the next edition of RB&B's big top extravaganza turns to video. —M. George Stevenson

LIFE ON EARTH

1980. Hosted/wr. David Attenborough 233m. 2 cas. \$39.95. Warner. Image: good.

This condensation of the phenomenal 13-hour BBC series lacks the full sprawl and grandeur of naturalist Attenborough's journey through evolution, but it does retain the most unforgettable sequences, enabling viewers to digest

3.5 billion years' worth of history in one or two sittings.

After an introductory segment retracing Darwin's voyage to the Galapagos islands and laying out evolutionary theory, *Life on Earth* reconstructs the logical progression of life from the first organic compounds to *Homo sapiens*. But the extraordinary nature of the production and the show's host are what elevate this above the ordinary video textbook fare. The photography is unbelievable: breathtaking close-ups of birds, bats, and insects hovering in flight; birth sequences of frogs and dolphins that must be repeated in slow motion to be fully appreciated.

Even amidst such gloriously intimate observations of the richness and diversity of life on earth, the most fascinating organism here is Attenborough himself. His free-flowing diction is as impeccable as it is easily comprehensible, and his delivery exudes boyish enthusiasm for the subject matter. It's impossible not to be envious as we see him emerge in scuba gear from a coral lagoon, excitedly play recordings of whale songs from a boat in the Pacific, or climb up a tree to discourse about primates.

Other noteworthy sequences span continents within a single thought. One which begins in Australia with marsupial births segues to the Arctic, where Attenborough appears in the same sentence to comment about baby harp seals. Unfortunately, the videocassette edit omits many similar segments that were present in the original. But this version does have one advantage: A ChapterSearch Index denotes chapters and sections at the beginning and end of each cassette, and corresponding number inserts make it easy to scan to desired points.

—Jim Bessman

GERMANY—DADA

1968. Dir. Helmut Herbst. 55m. \$14.95. Kartes. Image: good.

MONSIEUR RENE

MAGRITTE

1978. Wr./dir. Adrian Maben. 60m. \$39.95. Home Vision. Image: good.

As *The National Observer's* Bill Marvel commented, referring to the Kartes Museum Without Walls series, "The camera has made it possible for the first time in history for anyone to survey the

entire visual culture of the race from an easy chair." It's about time, too—those boring museum trips were becoming a real drag.

If *Germany—Dada and Monsieur Rene Magritte* are typical of this best of all brave new cultural worlds, then I'd say we're about half in trouble. The former is a fine example of how a subject can be adapted to pedagogic form, while the latter is a bore, the kind of documentary most of us spent our Wonder years dozing off to in class.

Germany—Dada treats its subject—the irrational, bizarre, and whimsical art movement spawned in post-World War I Zurich—in an appropriately dadaesque style. In reverse alphabetic order, the main figures and facets of dada are represented through artworks and director Helmut Herbst's hyperactive editing. Dada slogans, graphics, and manifestos are thrown about with zany abandon, sucking the viewer into the scene's energetic illogic. Primary texts are used whenever possible. The program was produced with the cooperation of original dadaists Hans Richter and Richard Huelsenbeck, and includes two films (*Rhythm*, 1921, and *Ghosts Before Breakfast*, 1927) by the former as well as a poem ("Phantastische Gebete") recited by the latter. A good portion is also devoted to the work of Kurt Schwitters (who eventually disavowed dadaism). He is seen reading his famous 1932 sound piece, *Die Sonate in Urlaufen*.

Conversely, *Monsieur Rene Magritte* plods through the Belgian surrealist's oeuvre, desperately trying to impart further mystery to these already anxious and beguiling objects by means of slow, creepy zooms. Things pick up towards the end, when we get a gander of home movies *chez Magritte*. He casts off the sober persona otherwise instilled by the film's editing and narration, goofing for the camera and dressing his wife in mask and tuba.

—Richard Gehr

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

1986. Dustin Hoffman, Charles Durning, Stephen Lang, John Malkovich, Kate Reid; dir. Volker Schlondorff. 135m. \$79.95. Karl. Image: excel.

PRIVATE CONVERSATION: ON THE SET OF DEATH

OF A SALESMAN

1987. Pr./dir. Christian Blackwood. 82m. Hi St \$59.95. Karl. Image: excel.

How good is this interpretation of Arthur Miller's masterpiece? Good enough to convince me of a terrible truth: I am Willy Loman, and you probably are, too. Like Willy, most of us live in the blue,



Rene Magritte's paintings: anxious and beguiling.

riding on a smile and a shoeshine or something equally fragile. When the smile and shoeshine fade and the world stops buying what we have to sell, all manner of personal hell breaks loose.

Experiencing this *Death of a Salesman* feels like witnessing your own autopsy. Director Schlondorff's scalpel slices off the skin-deep lies that allow Willy—and us—to cope with life. The characters, as played by Hoffman, Durning, Lang, Malkovich, and Reid, cut very close to the bone.

Miller is, of course, the chief architect of *Death of a Salesman*'s terrible greatness, but the director and actors wring every drop of galling truth from the play. As *Private Conversation*, the behind-the-scenes companion video, shows, Schlondorff pushes his players—especially Hoffman—to the point of physical exhaustion, a tool for exposing the emotional exhaustion of the Loman family.

Hoffman is unrelenting in his role. As Willy's sanity unravels, Hoffman falls apart with him, leaving searching gaps in his sentences. His eyes grow glassy; the odor of death settles on him. The staging offers a magic lantern show of Willy's slipping grip on reality. At Frank's Chop House, where son Biff tries to describe his latest business failure, flashbacks of an earlier catastrophe intrude on Willy through the windows.

Private Conversation heightens the impact of *Death of a Salesman*. In it, Hoffman compares the play to a bad acid trip, a horror movie of the soul. Playwright Miller is on the set, too, adding his voice to the director's in shaping the production. "It's a combination of the fantastic and a kind of super-reality," Miller

says of his play. "It's surreal, which is just what it should be."

—Andrew Robin

THE GALAXY BEING

1963. B&W. Cliff Robertson, Jacqueline Scott; wr./dir. Leslie Stevens. 53m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA. Image: good.

MAN WITH THE POWER

1963. B&W. Donald Pleasence, Priscilla Morrell; dir. Laslo Benedek. 52m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA. Image: good.

THE HUNDRED DAYS OF THE DRAGON

1963. B&W. Sidney Blackmer, Phillip Pine; dir. Byron Haskin. 52m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA. Image: good.

There is nothing wrong with your magazine. We are controlling publication. We can control type size. We can control the illustrations. For the next 300 words we will control all that you see and think. You are reading a review that reaches from the inner mind to... The Outer Limits.

If this were an *Outer Limits* episode, as are these videos, scientists would be standing around, soberly discussing in dismal elementary terms some theory concerning atomic or electromagnetic energy. *The Outer Limits* (1963-65) specialized in such explanations, especially long, drawn-out ones. Then the Special Effect of the Week—usually someone in a clunky costume lovingly photographed in negative imagery—would be introduced.

After the SEOTW caused a few unintentional deaths and wreaked havoc on a power station or a small town, a suicide was usually necessary to rid the world of the latest menace and restore the natural family order. At the end of the show, a bored voice recited the week's moral: "It is only by understanding ourselves and others that we can continue to preserve our American way of life and freedoms in a hostile universe."

Formulaic and utterly lacking in intentional humor, *The Outer Limits* is the *ne plus ultra* of fictionalized television science. Of these three episodes, Donald Pleasence as *The Man with the Power* best exemplifies the series in its most schematic form. *The Galaxy Being* features Cliff Robertson as an obsessed scientist tinkering around in a radio station's transmitter. *The Hundred Days of the Dragon*, which would have made a better *Twilight Zone*, involves the old plastic-surgery switcheroo between a newly-elected United States president and the cold and unlovable agents of an unnamed Oriental government. Filmed in 1963, it's about as racist as you'd expect.

—Richard Gehr

Directory

NEW RELEASES ON TAPE AND DISC

ACTION

America 3000. 1986. Chuck Wagner, Laurene Landon. Future world ruled by women. 94m. (PG-13) Hi ss \$79.95. MGM/UA.

The Best of Bonanza Vols. 1, 2. 1959-1973. Lorne Greene, Dan Blocker, Michael Landon. Vintage Ponderosa, 2 episodes per cas. Vol. 1: *A Rose for Lotta* (pilot), *The Underdog* (with Charles Bronson). Vol. 2: *The Dark Gate* (James Coburn), *The Honor of Cochise* (DeForest Kelley). 120m. ea. \$39.95 ea. Republic.

Blood Debts. Yr. n.a. Richard Harrison. Man tracks hunters who raped his daughter. 91m. \$59.95. Continental.

Captain Blood. 1935, czd. 1986. Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone; dir. Michael Curtiz. Wrongfully imprisoned doctor becomes pirate leader. 99m. Hi St (simulated) cc \$59.98. CBS/Fox.

Choke Canyon. 1986. Stephen Collins, Janet Julian, Bo Svenson. Nuclear accident jeopardizes scientist's research. 96m. (PG) Hi \$79.95. Media.

The Corsican Brothers. 1941. B&W. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Ruth Warrick. Adaptation of the Dumas swashbuckler: separated siamese twins remain linked in spirit. 111m. Price n.a. Late.

The Deadly Companions. 1961. Maureen O'Hara, Brian Keith, Chill Wills; dir. Sam Peckinpah. Cavalry officer leads funeral procession through Indian territory. 90m. B Hi V \$59.95. New World.

Gambit. 1966. Shirley MacLaine, Michael Caine, Herbert Lom; dir. Ronald Neame. Burglar meets dancer who resembles the statue

he plans to steal. 109m. Hi \$59.95. MCA.

The Horsemen. 1971. Omar Sharif, Leigh Taylor-Young, Jack Palance; dir. John Frankenheimer. Afghani tribesman enters grueling competition to please his father. 109m. (PG) Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

In the Shadows of Kilimanjaro. 1986. Timothy Bottoms, John Rhys-Davies. Drought drives baboons to prey on humans. 94m. (R) \$79.95. USA.

The Persuaders: Overture, Five Miles to Midnight. 1972. Tony Curtis, Roger Moore. Episodes of TV series with Imogen Hassall (*Overture*), Joan Collins (*Midnight*). 60m. ea. Hi \$39.95 ea. Sonys.

Quiet Cool. 1986. James Remar, Jared Martin. Cop pursues pot growers who killed his ex-girlfriend. 80m. (R) Hi St \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

Raw Courage. 1983. Ronny Cox, Art Hindle, M. Emmet Walsh. Trio of runners in New Mexico assaulted by citizen's army. 90m. (R) B Hi V \$69.95. New World.

The Return of Josey Wales. 1986. Michael Parks, Raphael Campos. Mysterious gunman returns to rescue comrade. 90m. (R) \$79.95. Magnum.

Scorchy. 1976. Connie Stevens, Cesare Danova. Stevens as undercover agent determined to break drug-smuggling ring. 100m. (R) \$69.98. Lightning.

Thrashin'. 1986. Josh Brolin. Skateboarding teens. 92m. (PG-13) \$79.95. Continental.

Three Bullets for a Long Gun. 1973. Keith Van Der Wat, Patrick Munhardt. Lure of buried treasure sparks competition. 89m. Hi \$59.95. Charter.

Walk into Hell. 1957. Chips Rafferty, Francoise Christophe. Aus-

tralians on safari get hostile reception from New Guinea natives. 91m. Hi \$59.95. Charter.

CHILDREN'S

Blockbuster Magic with Bob McAllister. 1987. 24 magic tricks. 60m. \$14.95. Congress.

Bozo the Clown Vols. 1-4. 1987 comp. anim. TV fare, 5 per cas. 30m. ea. \$14.95 ea. Congress.

Children's Heroes of the Bible. 1987. anim. Four cas. *The Story of David*, *The Story of Moses*, *The Story of Elijah*, *The Story of the Apostles*. 23m. ea. \$19.95 ea. Vanguard.

Disney's Sing-Along Songs: Heigh-Ho. 1987 comp. anim. Musical sequences from *Snow White*, *Mary Poppins*, *Three Caballeros*.

PROGRAMMING LEGEND

DATE

Varies according to type of program. **Films:** original theatrical release. **Made-for-broadcast:** first telecast. **Made-for-video:** first release in any format. **Compilations:** production of collected work.

FORMAT

All programs are available in Beta and VHS unless noted. All programs on disc are also available on tape unless noted. The following abbreviations apply:

B: Beta videocassette
V: VHS videocassette
8: 8mm videocassette
LV: LaserVision videodisc
in either in CLV or
CAV playing format.
CED: CED videodisc

AUDIO FEATURES

All available audio information is provided. Dolby noise reduction, which is used on virtually all VHS tapes, is not noted. The following abbreviations apply:

St: stereo
Hi: Hi-Fi
ss: Dolby surround stereo
cc: closed-captioned
CX: CX encoded

Editors' choices in the Directory are highlighted with red titles.

IMAGE QUALITY

For theatrical releases, this rating refers to the transfer quality and overall visual appearance. For non-theatrical programs, it refers to overall visual quality.

excel.: exceptionally attractive and/or faithful to the original
good: adequate but unremarkable
fair: passable, but below average.
poor: seriously flawed

ETCETERA

Official MPAA ratings (G, PG, PG-13, R, X) are provided when available. All programs are in color unless noted. List prices are not given for CED discs.

anim.: animated
B&W: black & white
cas.: videocassette
comp.: compilation
czd.: colorized
dir.: directed by
m.: minutes
n.a.: not available
nar.: narrated by
pr.: produced by
RE: reissue
sub.: subtitled
wr.: written by

etc. with lyrics appearing on screen. 30m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

The Dragon That Wasn't (Or Was He?). 1983. anim. Dutch feature about bear who adopts baby dragon. 96m. Hi \$29.95. MCA.

Five Lionni Classics: The Animal Fables of Leo Lionni. 1987. anim. Includes *Frederick*, *Cornelius*, *It's Mine*, *Fish Is Fish*, *Swimmy*. 30m. cc Price n.a. Random

Here's Donald!. 1987 comp. anim. Three shorts: *Wide Open Spaces* ('47), *Crazy with the Heat* ('47), *Donald's Ostrich* ('37). 30m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Here's Goofy!. 1987 comp. anim. Includes *For Whom the Bell Tolls* ('53), *Lion Down* ('50), *A Knight for a Day* ('45). 30m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Here's Mickey!. 1987 comp. anim. Includes *Mickey's Garden* ('35), *Orphans' Benefit* ('41), *Mickey's Birthday Party* ('41). 30m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Here's Pluto!. 1987 comp. anim. Includes *Mail Dog* ('47), *Pantry Pirate* ('41), *Springtime for Pluto* ('44). 30m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Jem Vol. 2: Last Resorts. 1986. anim. Two stories in rock/pop setting. 67m. \$24.95. Family.

Kidnapped. 1973. anim. Stevenson adaptation for TV: Uncle sells orphaned nephew into slavery to grab inheritance. 49m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA.

Kids in Motion. 1987. Scott Baio hosts program of coordination-enhancing routines, among them "The Freeze," "Balancing Act," and "Tummy Tango." With the Temptations. 67m. Hi St cc \$19.98. Playhouse.

Lassie in the Miracle. 1975. Mute boy saves Lassie's litter from shot-

gun blast. 90m. Hi \$29.95. Viddy-Oh!

Laurel and Hardy Vols. 1-4. 1987 comp. anim. Made for TV. 30m. ea. \$14.95 ea. Congress.

Lightning—The White Stallion. 1986. Mickey Rooney, Susan George. Girl cares for injured man's stolen horse. 93m. (PG) Hi \$79.95. Media.

Little Women: The Other Beth. 1987. anim. Shy sister learns to overcome timidity. 30m. Hi \$14.95. Sony.

Mister Jaw Cartoon Festival Featuring "Monster of the Deep." 1987 comp. anim. Made for TV; includes *To Catch a Halibut*, *Flying Fool*, 3 more. 32m. Hi \$14.95. Viddy-Oh!

The Mother Goose Video Treasury Vols. 1-4. 1987. Actors, puppets recite favorite nursery rhymes. Approx. 30m. ea. \$14.95 ea. J2.

My Sesame Street Home Video. 1987. Four cas.: *Getting Ready for School*, *Learning to Add and Subtract*, *Sing Along*, *Big Bird's Story Time*. 30m. ea cc Price n.a. Random.

The Mysterious Island. 1975. anim. TV adaptation of Jules Verne novel. 49m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA.

101 Things for Kids to Do. 1987. Shari Lewis. Tricks, riddles, puppets, games, stunts, crafts, more. 60m. cc Price n.a. Random.

115th Edition of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. 1987. Highlights from latest "Greatest" plus backstage visits with stars. 110m. cc \$89.95. Family.

The Perils of Problemania. 1987. anim. Plucky pair of ants save colony from anteater. 90m. \$59.98. Lightning.

LABELS FOR LESS

Special promotions and other pricing news

• CBS/Fox's *Playhouse* label reduces the prices of 26 *Faerie Tale Theatre* titles from \$39.95 to \$19.98 each. Included are *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Tale of the Frog Prince*, *Rumstiltskin*, and *The Princess Who Never Laughed*.

• **Key Video** throws a "Spotlight II" on selected features starring Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, and James Cagney, now permanently priced at \$29.95. Bette headlines *All About Eve*, *Jezebel*, *Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte*, *Madame Sin*, *Now Voyager*, *The Letter*, *Watch on the Rhine*, and *Juarez*; Cagney carries *White Heat*, *What Price Glory*, *Public Enemy*, *Footlight Parade*, *The Roaring '20s*, *13 Rue Madeleine*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Bogey cools his way through *The Big Sleep*, *Dark Passage*, *High Sierra*, *Key Largo*, *They Drive by Night*, *Passage to Marseilles*, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Petrified Forest* (with Davis), *The Barefoot Contessa*, and *The Left Hand of God*.

• **Walt Disney Home Video** launches "Classic Disney at a Goofy Price" with eight \$14.95 cassettes: *Here's Mickey*, *Here's Donald*, *Here's Pluto*, *Here's Goofy*, *Silly Symphonies*, *Disney's Sing-Along Songs: Heigh Ho*, *The Reluctant Dragon*, and *Winnie the Pooh and a Day for Eeyore* (see Directory listings).

• **IVE's Family** label releases a trio of Chuck Jones animated programs at \$14.95, each under the banner "The Jungle Book Stories": *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, *The White Seal*, and *Mowgli's Brothers*.

• **Sony** reprises 26 music titles in their "Midline II" promotion, a follow-up to last summer's "Midline I." *Video 45s* featuring Phil Collins, Tears for Fears, Sheena Easton, Coney Hatch, and Helix now go for \$9.95; \$14.95 gets you *Video EPs* by Katrina and the Waves, Pete Townshend, Bananarama, David Bowie, WASP, Bon Jovi, Golden Earring, the Jam, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and the Everly Brothers; *Video LPs* by American Suite, Brian Eno, Donnie Iris, Michael Stanley Band, Rick Derringer, Split Enz, and Devo drop to \$19.95. In addition, all children's titles now sell for \$9.95 to \$29.95; these include *Curious George*, *Black Beauty*, *The Hobbit*, and *Voltron*.

—Steve Daly

Potato Head Kids. 1986. anim. Toy tie-in starring progeny of Mr. Potato Head. 40m. \$19.95. Family.

Rambo: Exercise in Terror. 1986. anim. Cartoon tie-in with Stallone film. 100m. \$39.95. Family.

Reader's Digest Children's Classics. 1987. anim. Four separate cas.: *The Little Mermaid*, nar. Richard Chamberlain; *The Selfish Giant*; *The Remarkable Rocket*, nar. David Niven; *The Happy Prince*, nar. Christopher Plummer, Glynis Johns. 26m. ea. cc Price n.a. Random.

The Reluctant Dragon. 1987 comp. anim. Featurette *Dragon* ('41) plus cartoon *Morris the Midget Moose* ('50). 28m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Runaway Island—The Exiles. 1987. Episode of Australian adventure

ture series. 103m. Hi \$59.95. Sony.

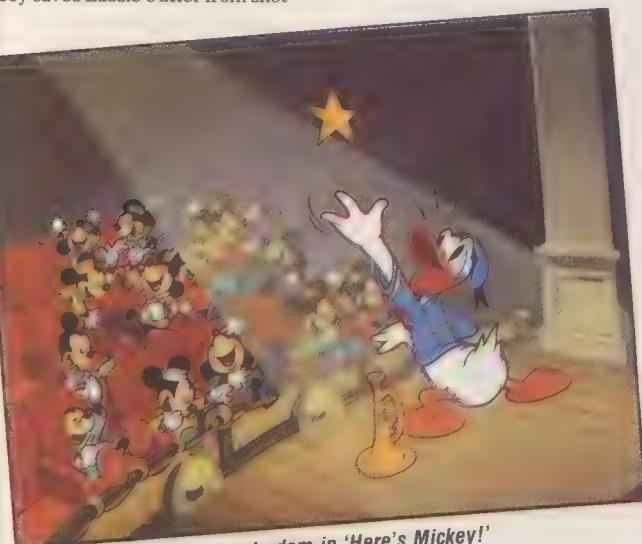
Silly Symphonies. 1987 comp. anim. Three shorts: *Water Babies* ('35), *Toby Tortoise Returns* ('36), *Three Little Wolves* ('36). 30m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Swiss Family Robinson. 1972. anim. TV adaptation: family stranded on South Seas island. 49m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA.

Tijuana Toads Cartoon Festival Featuring "Go for Croak." 1987 comp. anim. Frog duo in five shorts. 33m. Hi \$14.95. Viddy-Oh!

Travels of Marco Polo. 1972. anim. TV cartoon of trek to China. 48m. Hi \$19.95. MGM/UA.

Winnie the Pooh and a Day for Eeyore. 1983. anim. Residents of Hundred Acre Wood nearly over



Donald Duck reaches for stardom in 'Here's Mickey'!

look Eeyore's birthday. 25m. Hi \$14.95. Disney.

Zoobilee Zoo: The Land of Rhymes and Other Stories/Laughland and Other Stories. 1987. Ben Vereen leads cast of animal characters in songs and stories. Two cas. 70m. ea. Hi \$29.95 ea. Magic.

COMEDY

Another Thin Man. 1939. B&W. William Powell, Myrna Loy, Virginia Grey. Third outing for husband-wife sleuths Nick and Nora Charles; first appearance of Nick Jr. 105m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

Armed and Dangerous. 1986. John Candy, Eugene Levy, Robert Loggia. Bungling ex-cop and inept ex-lawyer sign on at crooked guard company. 88m. (PG-13) Hi ss cc \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

Bob Hope Entertains the Troops. 1951. B&W. TV special with Hope and guest Dorothy Maguire in South Korea. 30m. \$14.95. Congress.

Bonnie Scotland. 1935. B&W. Laurel & Hardy, June Lang. Spoof

of foreign legion dramas. 80m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

Burns & Allen. 1950. B&W. George Burns, Gracie Allen. Two episodes from TV series. 60m. \$14.95. Congress.

Detective School Dropouts. 1985. David Lansberg, Lorin Dreyfuss. Inept duo bungle their way through kidnapping case. 92m. (PG) Hi ss \$79.95. MGM/UA.

Down by Law. 1986. B&W. Tom Waits, John Lurie, Robert Benigni; wr./dir. Jim Jarmusch. Pair of New Orleans drifters break jail with help of cellmate, an eccentric Italian tourist. 107m. (R) Hi St (simulated) cc \$79.98. Key.

Eat and Run. 1986. Ron Silver, R.L. Ryan. Visiting alien develops taste for Italian food—people, not pasta. 85m. (R) B Hi V \$79.95. New World.

El Gordo y el Flaco: Laurel and Hardy. 1930-1931. B&W. Shorts re-filmed in Spanish (not dubbed) with different supporting casts. Five cas.: *Los Calaveras/El Canelo (Be Big/Laughing Gravy)*, *La Vida Nocturna (Blotto)*, *Ladrones (Night Owls)*, *Politiquerias (Chickens Come Home)*, *Noche de Duendes/Tiembra y Titubea (The Laurel & Hardy Murder Case/Be-*



Joe Piscopo struts his stuff in the 'Joe Piscopo New Jersey Special.'

low Zero). 50-85m. ea. \$19.95 ea. Roach.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off. 1986. Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck, Mia Sara; wr./pr./dir. John Hughes. High school seniors cut class to spend day in Chicago. 103m. (PG-13) Hi ss cc \$79.95. Paramount.

Flicks. 1983. Pamela Sue Martin, Martin Mull. Parody of Saturday matinee featuring newsreel, cartoon, horror film, space serial. 79m. (R) Hi \$69.95. Media.

Haunted Honeymoon. 1986. Gene Wilder, Gilda Radner, Dom DeLuise; dir. Wilder. Spoof of '40s horror movies. 88m. (PG-13) Hi \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

In Search of the Perfect 10. 1986. Andrew Nichols. Burlesque of "Lifestyles"-type programs. 60m. \$39.95. Magnum.

The Jack Benny Show. 1954. B&W. Benny, Bing Crosby, George Burns, Kirk Douglas, Fred MacMurray. Two episodes of Benny's variety series. 60m. \$14.95. Congress.

Joe Piscopo New Jersey Special. 1985. Eddie Murphy, Danny DeVito. Piscopo impersonates David Hartman, Andy Rooney, Joan Rivers, David Letterman, Springsteen, and Sinatra. 60m. Hi \$59.95. Vestron.

The Lemon Drop Kid. 1951. B&W. Bob Hope, Fred Clark, Lloyd Nolan. Hope as bookie on the run from gangster. 91m. Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

Milton Berle: His Famous Dragnet Parody. 1954. B&W. Berle, Vic Damone, Jackie Cooper. Two episodes from Berle's TV show. 60m. \$14.95. Congress.

More Moran Movies. 1987 comp. Short films by Len Cella including *The Blind Dentist*, *The Bra Unhooking Champion*, *Broccoli Abused*. 55m. \$19.95. MPI.

Night Call Nurses. 1972. Patricia T. Byrne, Alana Collins, Dick Mill-

NEW 8mm RELEASES

An American in Paris. 1951. Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron. Musical. 113m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Brigadoon. 1954. Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse. Musical. 108m. St \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Citizen Kane. 1941. B&W. Co-wr./dir. Orson Welles. Drama. 119m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Dinner at Eight. 1933. B&W. John Barrymore, Jean Harlow. Comedy/drama. 113m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Gigi. 1959. Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jourdan. Musical. 116m. St \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Gung Ho. 1986. Michael Keaton. Comedy. 111m. (PG-13) ss \$29.95. Paramount.

High Society. 1956. Grace Kelly, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra. Musical. 107m. St \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. 1984. Harrison Ford,

Kate Capshaw. Action. 118m. (PG) ss \$29.95. Paramount.

King Kong. 1933. B&W. Robert Armstrong, Fay Wray. Monster movie. 100m. \$29.95. RKO.

Little Women. 1933. B&W. Katharine Hepburn. Melodrama. 100m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Meet Me in St. Louis. 1944. Judy Garland; dir. Vincente Minnelli. Musical. 113m. St (simulated) \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Motown 25: Yesterday, Today and Forever. 1983. TV special. 130m. St \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Mutiny on the Bounty. 1935. B&W. Clark Gable, Charles Laughton. Drama. 132m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

National Velvet. 1944. Mickey Rooney, Elizabeth Taylor. Children's. 125m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

A Night at the Opera. 1935. B&W. Marx Brothers romp.

92m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Ninotchka. 1939. B&W. Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas; dir. Ernst Lubitsch. Comedy. 110m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Pink Panther: A Fly in the Pink. 1987 comp. anim. Children's. 57m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Pretty in Pink. 1986. Molly Ringwald, Andrew McCarthy. Teen romance. 96m. (PG-13) ss \$29.95. Paramount.

The Secret of NIMH. 1982. anim. Dir. Don Bluth. Children's. 82m. (G) ss \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. 1954. Howard Keel, Jane Powell. Musical. 103m. St \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Top Hat. 1935. B&W. Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers. Musical. 99m. \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Young Sherlock Holmes. 1985. Nicholas Rowe, Alan Cox, Sophie Ward. Action/mystery. 109m. (PG-13) ss \$29.95. Paramount.

er. Hospital shift noted for its bedside manner. 85m. Hi \$59.95. Charter.

Nobody's Fool. 1986. Rosanna Arquette, Eric Roberts; wr. Beth Henley. Romance between small-town actress, visiting set designer. 107m. (PG) \$79.95. Karl.

The Odd Squad. 1986. Vincent Gardenia, Johnny Dorrelli. Misfit WWII platoon defends bridge. 82m. \$79.95. Prism.

Shoot Loud, Louder...I Don't Understand. 1966. Marcello Mastroianni, Raquel Welch. Day-dreaming antique dealer thinks he's witnessed a murder. 101m. Hi \$59.95. Charter.

Sincerely Charlotte. 1986. Isabelle Huppert, Niels Arestrup. Adventuress suspected of boyfriend's murder. 92m. Hi sub. \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

Stewardess School. 1986. Brett Cullen, Mary Cadorette. Sex farce with wings. 84m. (R) Hi \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

They Might Be Giants. 1971. George C. Scott, Joanne Woodward, Jack Gilford. Psychiatrist named Watson attempts cure of patient who fancies himself Sherlock Holmes. 98m. (G) Hi \$59.95. MCA.

Three's Trouble. 1985. Jacki Weaver, John Waters. Wife of stuffy academic fancies handsome male babysitter. 93m. B Hi V \$69.95. New World.

Tillie's Punctured Romance. 1914. B&W. Charlie Chaplin, Marie Dressler; dir. Mack Sennett. Chaplin plays sophisticate out to swindle naive young woman. 42m. Price n.a. Late.

True Stories. 1986. David Byrne, John Goodman, Swoosie Kurtz; co-wr./dir. Byrne. Mock-documentary set in mythical Texas town. 89m. (PG) Hi ss cc \$79.95. Warner.

Weekend Warriors. 1986. Chris Lemmon, Lloyd Bridges; dir. Bert Convy. Film studio employees enlist in National Guard to dodge draft. 88m. (R) \$79.98. Lightning.

DRAMA

Abe Lincoln in Illinois. 1940. B&W. Raymond Massey, Gene Lockhart, Ruth Gordon. Bio adapted from Robert Sherwood play. 110m. \$29.95. RKO.

About Last Night. 1986. Rob Lowe, Demi Moore, James Belushi. Adaptation of David Mamet play: two young singles tired of Chicago bar scene begin affair. 113m. (R) Hi ss \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Berlin Affair. 1985. Gudrun Landgrebe, Kevin McNally. Japanese seductress manipulates trio in 1930s Berlin. 97m. (R) Hi ss \$79.95. MGM/UA.

Beulah Land. 1985. Lesley Ann Warren, Don Johnson, Meredith Baxter Birney. TV miniseries: intrigue at Southern plantation during Civil War. 267m. (2 cas.) Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

Camille. 1936. B&W. Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore; dir. George Cukor. Adaptation of Dumas novel: Parisienne's reputation forces her to break af-

fair with young suitor. 108m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

The Citadel. 1938. B&W. Robert Donat, Rosalind Russell, Rex Harrison; dir. King Vidor. Doctor abandons ideals in drive to build lucrative practice. 112m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

The Clock. 1944. B&W. Judy Garland, Robert Walker, Keenan Wynn; dir. Vincente Minnelli. Soldier on leave falls in love with girl he meets in Grand Central Station. 90m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

Club Life. 1985. Tom Parsekian, Tony Curtis, Dee Wallace Stone. Mob tries to turn nightclub into drug clearing house. 93m. (R) \$79.95. Prism.

The End of August. 1982. Sally Sharp. Young wife takes a lover, ca. 1900. 104m. (PG) Hi \$59.95. Charter.

Fatal Vision. 1984. Karl Malden, Eva Marie Saint, Andy Griffith. Docu-drama about Jeffrey McDonald, Green Beret doctor convicted of murdering his family. 192m. (2 cas.) Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Flame Is Love. 1979. Linda Purl, Timothy Dalton. Heiress is unaware her new beau is a Satanist. 98m. \$69.98. Lightning.

The Game Is Over. 1966. Jane Fonda, Michel Piccoli; dir. Roger Vadim. Wife seduces stepson. 97m. (R) Hi \$69.95. Media.

The Girl from Petrovka. 1974. Goldie Hawn, Hal Holbrook, Anthony Hopkins. Russian ballerina in love with visiting journalist. 103m. (PG) Hi \$59.95. MCA.

The Great Impostor. 1961. B&W. Tony Curtis, Raymond Massey, Karl Malden. Life of '50s hoaxer Waldo Demura. 112m. Hi \$59.95. MCA.

Little House on the Prairie: The Lord Is My Shepherd. Yr. n.a. Michael Landon, Melissa Gilbert, Ernest Borgnine; dir. Landon. Feature-length episode of TV series. 94m. Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

Manhunter. 1986. William L. Petersen, Dennis Farina; wr./dir. Michael Mann. Detective obsessed with guessing serial killer's next move. 119m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.95. Karl.

The Morning After. 1986. Jane Fonda, Jeff Bridges; dir. Sidney Lumet. Woman wakes from drinking binge to find lover murdered. (R) Hi \$79.95. Karl.

Place of Weeping. 1986. James Whyle. South African woman struggles against injustices of apartheid. 88m. (PG) B Hi V \$79.95. New World.

Romance Theatre. 1987. Melodramas produced by Granada TV: *Mona, A Dedicated Man, Office Romances, Letting the Birds Go Free, Miss A and Miss M.* 60m. ea. V only \$11.95 ea. Prism.

Scenes from a Murder. 1972. Telly Savalas, Anne Heywood, Giorgio Piazza. Actress' curtain call may be her last. 91m. \$69.98. Lightning.

Secret Honor. 1985. Philip Baker Hall; dir. Robert Altman. Filming of Hall's one-man show, including Richard Nixon impersonation. 90m. \$69.95. Vestron.

The Shoes of the Fisherman. 1968. Anthony Quinn, Leo McKern, Laurence Olivier. Russian bishop imprisoned for political views becomes Pope. 152m. (G) Hi \$69.95. MGM/UA.

A Sunday in the Country. 1984. Louis Ducreux, Sabine Azema; co-wr./dir. Bertrand Tavernier. Rivalries surface during children's visit to aging painter's estate. 94m. (G) Hi sub. \$79.95. MGM/UA.

The Tenth Month. 1979. Carol Burnett, Dina Merrill; wr./co-dir. Joan Tewkesbury. TV movie: pregnant middle-aged divorcee resolves to raise child alone. 123m. \$59.98. Lightning.

The Virgin Soldiers. 1969. Hywel Bennett, Nigel Patrick, Lynn Redgrave. British army recruits in 1960 Singapore. 96m. Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

Wetherby. 1985. Vanessa Redgrave, Judi Dench, Ian Holm; dir. David Hare. Uninvited dinner guest returns to apologize to host, then kills himself. 104m. (R) Hi cc \$79.95. MGM/UA.

Winner Takes All. 1986. Jason Connery, Diane Cilento. Freshman adjusts to 1965 campus scene. 94m. \$59.95. Academy.

A Woman's Face. 1941. B&W. Joan Crawford, Melvyn Douglas, Conrad Veidt; dir. George Cukor. Plastic surgery changes woman's life. 105m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

Yuri Nosenko, KGB. 1986. Tommy Lee Jones, Oleg Rudnik. Agent reveals Soviet role in JFK assassination. \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

Horror



Goldie Hawn is 'The Girl From Petrovka.'

And Now the Screaming Starts! 1973. Peter Cushing, Herbert Lom, Patrick Magee. Newlyweds in haunted mansion. 87m. (R) \$79.95. Prism.



Asylum (a.k.a. *House of Crazies*). 1972. Peter Cushing, Britt Ekland, Charlotte Rampling. Quartet of stories explaining how patients wound up in asylum. 100m. (PG) \$79.95. Prism.

Chopping Mall. 1986. Paul Bartel, Mary Woronov. Malfunctioning security robots declare open season on shoppers. 77m. (R) \$79.95. Lightning.

Class of Nuke 'Em High. 1986. Janelle Brady, Gilbert Brenton. Nuclear accident transforms high school into gallery of grotesques. 84m. (R) Hi \$79.95. Media.

Evil Judgment. 1984. Pamela Collyer, Jack Langley. Knife murderer anxious to silence witness. 93m. Hi \$69.95. Media.

From Beyond. 1986. Barbara Crampton, Jeffrey Combs. H.P. Lovecraft story: doctor attempts to develop sixth sense in humans. 88m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.95. Vestron.

Killer Workout. 1986. Mystery gunman targets health club patrons. 89m. \$79.95. Academy.

Mutant Hunt. 1987. Rick Gianasi, Mary Sahey. Made-for-video gore-fest: deranged robots with penchant for pulling human bodies apart. 90m. \$69.95. Wizard.

Nail Gun Massacre. 1979. Rocky Patterson, Ron Queen. Title says it all. 90m. \$79.95. Magnum.

Sorority House Massacre. 1986. Angela O'Neill, Wendy Martel. Co-ed's premonition of imminent bloodbath comes true. 74m. (R) \$79.95. Warner.

Tales from the Darkside Vol. 5. 1984. Fritz Weaver, Ronee Blakely. Episodes of TV anthology: *In-*

side the Closet, *The False Prophet*, *Grandma's Last Wish*. 70m. \$29.95. Thriller.

Terror at Tenkiller. 1986. Mike Wiles, Stacey Logan. Possessive boyfriend stalks girl he's sure will jilt him. 87m. Hi St \$79.95. United.

How-to

The Acupressure Face-Lift. 1987. Lindsay Wagner demonstrates skin-toning techniques. 25m. \$19.95. Karl.

The Art of Landscaping. 1986. Howard Garrett outlines budgeting, layout, site analysis, irrigation, more. 52m. \$29.95. United.

Chef Paul Prudhomme's Louisiana Kitchen Vols. 1, 2. 1987. Preparing Cajun cuisine. 37m., 32m. \$19.95 ea. J2.

Classic Books on Video. 1987. Capsule adaptations with voice-over plot summaries, study guidelines, enactments of key scenes: *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Hamlet*, *The Iliad*, *Thomas Jefferson*. 40m. ea. \$19.95 ea. Best.

How to Have a Money-Making Garage Sale. 1987. Phyllis Diller. Includes stratagem for re-selling the tape. 24m. \$19.95. J2.

Jerry Baker's House Plant Tips and Tricks. 1987. Pointers on diagnosing floral ailments, selecting species appropriate to light conditions, controlling insects, more. 40m. \$19.95. Simon.

Jerry Baker's Lawn Care Tips and Tricks. 1987. Advice on growing a vigorous lawn. 30m. \$19.95. Simon.

Karatecise Workout. 1987. Self-defense instruction by karate master Dominick Giacobbe. 60m. \$29.95. Continental.

Ken O'Brien's Quarterback Clinic. 1987. N.Y. Jets QB on warm-up, play execution, more. 30m. \$14.95. Congress.

Reader's Digest Videoguides: Sewing Basics/Creating Your Own Wardrobe. 1987. Two cas. 119m. ea. Price n.a. Random.

The Reader's Digest Videomanual of Home Repair. 1987. Step-by-step instructions for repairing faucets, rewiring light switches, replacing windows, more. 110m. cc Price n.a. Random.

The Science of Hitting with Ted Williams. 1987. Batting instruction for all ages and abilities. 45m. \$29.95. Simon.

Smart Cookies Don't Crumble. 1987. Self-help program for women hosted by Dr. Sonya Friedman. 30m. \$24.95. J2.

Tennis to Win Vols. 1, 2. 1987. Host John Newcombe. Analysis of Wimbledon matches featuring Bjorn Borg, Jimmy Connors, John McEnroe, Billie Jean King. 75m. ea. \$19.98. ea. Congress.

Too Busy to Cook? 1987. Four cas. series: *Easy Entertaining*, *Light and Fresh Cooking*, *Weeknight Inspirations*, *Festive Desserts*. With menus, recipe cards, shopping lists. 60m. ea. \$14.95 ea. Karl.

Victory Garden Recipes: From the Garden to the Table. 1987. Marian Morash prepares vegetable dishes. 90m. Price n.a. Random.

MUSIC

The Barber of Seville. 1982. Maria Ewing, London Philharmonic. Rossini opera taped at England's Glyndebourne Opera House. 156m. Hi St sub. \$49.95. Home Vision.

Bobby Short at the Cafe Carlyle. 1981. Tin Pan Alley standards by the renowned cafe singer. 30m. \$19.95. Congress.

Broadway Melody of 1940. 1940. B&W. Fred Astaire, George Murphy, Eleanor Powell. Rocky friendship between dance partners. 102m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

Der Freischutz. 1985. Rosalind Plowright, Franco Bonisolli. Verdi opera taped at Arena di Verona. 146m. Hi St sub. \$49.95. Home Vision.

Der Rosenkavalier. Yr. n.a. Kiri Te Kanawa, Aage Haugland, Anne Howells. Sir George Solti conducts Royal Opera House orchestra in performance of Strauss opera. 204m. (2 cas.) Hi St sub. \$59.95. Home Vision.

Earl Thomas Conley—Greatest Video Hits. 1987 comp. "Too Many Times," "Once in a Blue Moon," more. 22m. Hi St \$19.95. MusicVision.

George Thorogood and the Destroyers Live. 1987 comp. Concert footage plus videos of "Bad to the Bone," "Nobody but Me," "I Drink Alone." 45m. Hi St \$19.95. Sony.

Hugh Shannon: The Saloon Singer. 1981. Performance taped at New York's David K club. 30m. \$19.95. Congress.

Il Trovatore. 1985. Placido Domingo, Anna Tomowa-Sintow. Taped at Royal Opera House in Covent Garden; cond. Julius Rudel. 145m. Hi St sub. \$39.95. Home Vision.

Jermaine Stewart—Frantic Romantic. 1987 comp. Includes "The Word Is Out," "We Don't Have to Take Our Clothes Off." 16m. Hi St \$19.95. MusicVision.

Keith Jarrett Trio: Standards. 1985. With Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette. Tokyo concert; pieces include "Stella by Starlight," "It's Easy to Remember." 105m. Hi St \$29.95. Sony.

Mabel Mercer: The Singer's Singer. 1981. Live at Cleo's, New York. 30m. \$19.95. Congress.

Orfeo ed Euridice. 1982. Dame Janet Baker, Elizabeth Gale, Elisabeth Speiser. British production of Gluck opera. 127m. Hi St sub. \$49.95. Home Vision.

Presenting Lily Mars. 1943. B&W. Judy Garland, Van Heflin, Fay Bainter. From Booth Tarkington novel: small town girl becomes Hollywood star. 104m. Hi \$24.95. MGM/UA.

The Prince's Trust All-Star Rock Concert. 1986. Phil Collins, Paul McCartney, Tina Turner, Sting, others. Benefit taped at Wembley Stadium, London. 59m. Hi St \$29.95. MGM/UA.

The Prince's Trust Rock Gala. 1982. Performances by Pete Townshend, Kate Bush, Robert Plant. 60m. Hi St \$19.95 (RE). MGM/UA.

The Unheard Music. 1987. Filmed documentary on L.A. rock band X. 87m. (R) Hi St \$79.98. Key.

SCI-FI

The Outer Limits. 1963. B&W. Episodes from TV series: *The Galaxy Being* (with Cliff Robertson), *The Hundred Days of the Dragon*, *The Man with the Power* (Donald Pleasence). 52m. ea. Hi \$19.95 ea. MGM/UA.

Wizards. 1977. anim. Voices of Bob Holt, Mark Hamill; wr./pr./dir. Ralph Bakshi. Sorcerer wages war on brother's kingdom. 81m. (PG) Hi St (simulated) cc \$79.98. Playhouse.

VERITÉ

Banks' Florilegium: The Flowering of the Pacific. 1984. wr./nar. Robert Hughes. 18th century botanist Banks compiles groundbreaking

vegetation study on voyages to the New World. 60m. \$39.95. Home Vision.

The Fabulous '60s Vols. 1-10. 1987. Nar. Peter Jennings. Portrait of 1960-1969; one year per cas. Events include student demonstrations, Beatles' arrival in U.S., first moon walk, much more. 60m. ea. \$19.95 ea. MPI.

Far from Poland. 1984. Dir. Jill Godmillow. History of the Solidarity movement by filmmaker denied permission to shoot in Poland. 106m. \$69.95. Facets Video, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60614; 312-281-9075.

Life on Earth. 1986. David Attenborough hosts condensation of his acclaimed nature series. Chapters indexed for easy access. 233m. (2 cas.) Hi \$39.95. Warner.

Lorne Greene's New Wilderness. 1987. Six separate cas.: *Hunters of the Chubut*, *Master Hunter of the Night*, *Old Dog New Tricks*, *Frozen Eden*, *The Ascent of the Chimps*, *Pretty Poison*. 22m. ea. \$14.95 ea. Prism.

Love Tapes Vol. 1. 1982. B&W. Various subjects offer monologues on love and longing. 28m. \$40. Mystic Fire, 24 Horatio St., New York, N.Y. 10014; 212-645-2733.

NEW VIDEOGRAPHIC RELEASES

About Last Night. 1986. Rob Lowe, Demi Moore. Comedy/drama. 113m. (R) ss CX \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Adventures of Mark Twain. 1986. anim. Children's. 86m. (G) CX \$29.95. Paramount.

Alabama: Greatest Video Hits. 1986 comp. 37m. Digital St CX \$24.95. Pioneer.

Aliens. 1986. Sigourney Weaver. Sci-fi/Horror. 138m. (2 discs) (R) ss CX cc \$44.98. CBS/Fox.

The Ambushers. 1967. Dean Martin, James Gregory. Spy

Bobby McFerrin: Spontaneous Inventions. 1987. Saxophonist Wayne Shorter joins McFerrin in concert. Includes "Walkin'", "Blackbird," more. Disc only. 48m. Digital St CX \$24.95. Pioneer.

Destination Moon. 1950. Warner Anderson, Tom Powers. Sci-fi. 91m. CX \$36.95. Image.

An Early Frost. 1985. Aidan Quinn, Gena Rowlands. Drama. 97m. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Elvis Memories. 1986. Color/B&W. Music. 48m. \$29.95. Vestron.

102m. (PG) ss CX \$36.95. Image.

It's a Wonderful Life. 1946. B&W. James Stewart, Donna Reed; dir. Frank Capra. CAV format (2 discs); includes production still scrapbook, commentary on second audio track. \$89.95. Criterion.

The Last Radio Station. 1986. Future DJ revives Motown hits. 60m. St. CX \$24.95. Pioneer.

Liquid Sky. 1983. Anne Carlisle, Paula Sheppard. Sci-fi fantasy. 114m. CX \$36.95. Image.

Live at the Village Vanguard. 1987. Jazz club performance featuring John Abercrombie, Michael Brecker, Peter Erskine. Disc only. 53m. Digital St CX \$24.95. Pioneer.

Marnie. 1964. Tippi Hedren, Sean Connery; dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Drama. Includes original theatrical trailer. 130m. (2 discs) CX \$39.98. MCA.

Natasha. 1985. Profile of ballerina Natalia Makarova. 70m. Dig. St CX \$34.95. Pioneer.

National Geographic Video. 1987. Three separate discs: *Born of Fire*, *Rain Forest*, *Great Whales*. 60m. ea. \$29.95 ea. Vestron.

1986 World Series Highlights. 1986. Commentary by Vin Scully, Joe Garagiola. CAV format. 60m. St \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

No Man of Her Own. 1933. B&W. Clark Gable, Carole Lombard. Comedy. Side 2 in CAV format; includes still file. 81m. CX \$29.98. MCA.

The Pawnbroker. 1965. Rod Steiger, Geraldine Fitzgerald; dir.

Sidney Lumet. Drama. 116m. CX \$34.95. Image.

Plan 9 from Outer Space. 1958. B&W. Bela Lugosi, Vampira. All-time worst horror flick. 78m. CX \$34.95. Image.

Rolling in the Sky: The Snowbirds. 1986. Aerobic feats set to music. CAV format. 55m. Digital St CX \$29.95. Pioneer.

Short Circuit. 1986. Steve Guttenberg, Ally Sheedy. Comedy. 98m. (PG) ss CX cc \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

Slaughterhouse Five. 1972. Michael Sacks, Ron Leibman. Anti-war fantasy. 104m. (R) CX \$36.95. Image.

Sleuth. 1972. Laurence Olivier, Michael Caine. Mystery. 139m. (2 discs) CX \$44.95. Image.

Soul Man. 1986. C. Thomas Howell, Rae Dawn Chong. Comedy. 101m. (PG-13) CX \$36.95. Image.

Stand by Me. 1986. Wil Wheaton, River Phoenix; dir. Rob Reiner. Comedy-drama. 87m. (R) cc \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part II. 1986. Dennis Hopper; dir. Tobe Hooper. Horror. 109m. ss CX \$36.95. Image.

That Was Rock. 1964-65 ('85 comp.). B&W. Performances by Chuck Berry, Tina Turner, Ray Charles, others. 90m. CX \$36.95. Image.

True Stories. 1986. David Byrne. Comedy. 89m. (PG) ss CX \$34.98. Warner.

A Woman of Distinction. 1950. Rosalind Russell, Ray Milland. Comedy. 85m. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.



Jumping in the nick of time in Rob Reiner's 'Stand by Me.'

spoof. 102m. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Armed and Dangerous. 1986. John Candy, Eugene Levy. Comedy. 88m. (PG-13) ss CX \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Best of Spike Jones Vol. 1. 1952-57 ('86 comp.). B&W. Music. 51m. \$24.95. Paramount.

Big Trouble in Little China. 1986. Kurt Russell. Action. 99m. (PG-13) ss CX cc \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

March of Time: American Life-Styles 1939-1950. 1987 comps. B&W. Nar. Westbrook van Voorhis. Newsreel series originally produced by *Time Magazine*. Six cas.: *Show Business: The War Years 1939-1945/The Postwar Years 1946-1950, The American Family: The War Years 1941-1945/The Postwar Years 1946-1948, America's Youth 1940-1950, American Fashion and Leisure 1945-1950*. Approx. 90m. ea. Hi \$24.95 ea. Embassy.

Ming Garden. 1983. Award-winning film: Chinese courtyard moves to Metropolitan Museum of Art. 30m. \$29.95. Home Vision.

National Geographic Video. Yrs. n.a. Three programs from TV series: *Miniature Miracle: The Computer Chip, Polar Bear Alert, Creatures of the Namib Desert*. 60m. ea. cc \$29.95 ea. Vestron.

Norman Rockwell's World—An American Dream. 1973. Nar. Rockwell. Portrait of painter known for *Saturday Evening Post* covers. 30m. \$24.95. Home Vision.

Playboy Video Magazine 11. 1987. Frank Zappa interview, visit with Playmate Pamela Saunders, ribald tale "The Yacht," segment on Women of 7-11, more. 80m. cc \$39.95. Karl.

Spectacular Disasters. 1987. Nar. George Takei. Grim footage: Hindenburg explosion, San Francisco earthquake, bombing of Hiroshima. 45m. \$14.95. Congress.

Thomas Eakins: A Motion Portrait. 1986. Kevin Conway; nar. Sam Waterston. Produced for public TV—includes look at artist's works, dramatic recreations of his life. 60m. \$39.95. Home Vision.



National Geographic goes to the Arctic Circle in 'Polar Bear Alert.'

Travel Video. 1986. Guided tours on 5 separate cas.: *New Orleans, Orlando and Kissimmee-St. Cloud*

Florida, Ski Colorado, Cayman Islands, Old West Trail Country. 30m. ea. \$19.95 ea. Academy.

PROGRAMMING SOURCES

Academy Home Entertainment, P.O. Box 788, Pine Haven Shore Rd., Shelburne, Vt. 05482; 800-972-0001.

Active Home Video, 509 S. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212; 212-274-6726.

Best Film & Video Corp., 98 Cutler Mill Rd., Great Neck, N.Y. 11021; 516-487-4515.

CBS/Fox Video, 1211 Sixth Ave. New York, N.Y. 10036; 212-819-3200.

Charter Entertainment: see *Embassy*.

Congress Video Group, 10 E. 53 St., New York, N.Y. 10022; 212-371-3939.

Continental Video, 2320 Cotner, Los Angeles, Calif. 90064; 213-477-8055, 800-821-3427.

The Criterion Collection: see *Voyager*.

Walt Disney Home Video, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, Calif. 91521; 818-840-1111.

Embassy Home Entertainment, 1901 Ave. of the Stars, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067; 213-553-3600.

Family Home Ent'ment: see *IVE*.

HBO/Cannon Home Video, 1370 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019; 212-977-8990.

Home Vision, 5547 N. Ravenswood Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60640-

1199; 800-826-3456; in Ill. 312-878-2600 ext. 336.

Image Entertainment, 6311 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif. 90038; 213-468-8867, 800-421-4585.

IVE, 21800 Burbank Blvd., Box 4062, Woodland Hills, Calif. 91365-4062; 818-888-3040, 800-423-7455.

J2 Communications, 10850 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1000, Los Angeles, Calif. 90024; 213-474-5252.

Karl-Lorimar Home Video, 17942 Cowan Ave., Irvine, Calif. 92714; 714-474-0355.

Key Video: see *CBS/Fox*.

The Video *Late Show*: see *IVE*.

Lightning Video: see *Vestron*.

Magic Window Video: see *RCA/Columbia*.

Magnum Entertainment, 9301 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 602, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212; 213-278-9981, 800-MAGNUM8.

MCA Home Video, 70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, Calif. 91608; 818-508-4315.

Media Home Entertainment, 5730 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City, Calif. 90230; 213-216-7900, 800-421-4509.

MGM/UA Home Video, 1350 Sixth Ave. New York, N.Y. 10019; 212-408-0600.

MPI Home Video, 15825 Rob Roy Dr., Oak Forest, Ill. 60452; 312-687-7881, 800-323-0442.

MusicVision: see *RCA/Columbia*.

Mystic Fire Video, 24 Horatio St., New York, N.Y. 10014; 212-645-2733.

New World Video, 1440 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90025; 213-444-8100.

NFL Films Video, 330 Fellowship Rd., Mt. Laurel, N.J. 08054; 609-778-1600, 800-NFL-TAPE.

Pacific Arts Video, 50 N. La Cienega Blvd., Suite 210, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211; 213-657-2233.

Paramount Home Video, 5555 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90038-3197; 213-468-5000.

Pioneer Artists, 200 W. Grand Ave., Montvale, N.J. 07645; 201-573-1122.

Playhouse Video: see *CBS/Fox*.

Prism Entertainment, 1875 Century Pk. East, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067; 213-277-3270.

Random House Home Video, 201 E. 50 St., New York, N.Y. 10022; 212-872-8035.

RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, 3500 W. Olive Ave., Burbank, Calif. 91505; 818-953-7900.

Republic Pictures Home Video, 12636 Beatrice St., Box 66930,

Los Angeles, Calif. 90066-0930; 213-306-4040.

RKO Home Video, 1900 Ave. of the Stars, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067; 213-277-3133.

Hal **Roach** Studio Films Classics, 1600 N. Fairfax Ave., Hollywood, Calif. 90046; 213-850-0525.

Shokus Video, Box 8434, Van Nuys, Calif. 91409; 818-704-0400.

Simon & Schuster Video, 1 Gulf & Western Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10023; 212-373-8446.

Sony Video Software, 1700 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019; 212-757-4990.

Thriller Video: see *IVE*.

United Home Video, 4111 So. Darlington St., Tulsa, Okla. 74135; 918-622-6460, 800-331-4077.

Vanguard Video: see *United*.

Vestron Video, 60 Long Ridge Rd., Box 4000, Stamford, Conn. 06907; 203-968-0000.

Viddy-Oh! for Kids: see *MGM/UA*.

The **Voyager** Co., 2139 Manning Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90025; 800-446-2001; in Calif., 800-443-2001.

Warner Home Video, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Calif. 91522; 818-954-6000.

Wizard Video: see *Vestron*.

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Pioneer Reference Laser Vision Player



Until recently, Pioneer was the sole manufacturer of LaserVision players. Now that there's competition from Yamaha, the format is progressing rapidly. Pioneer's latest introduction, the LD-S1 Reference LaserVision Player, offers something video buffs have longed for: digital memory that delivers all the usual picture handling features at both the CAV (constant angular velocity) and CLV (constant linear velocity) speeds. These features, including still frame, frame advance, slow motion, speed play, and visible search, have always been available on the 30-minute-per-side CAV discs, which were more expensive than the 60-minute-per-side CLV discs. The digital memory also makes possible such new features as still picture with sound, strobe motion with sound, and completely noise-free scan.

Pioneer's LaserVision picture, already the best available, has also been improved. A special Accu-Focus system for the laser pickup reduces distortion of the signal as it is retrieved from the disc for higher resolution and better signal-to-noise ratios (S/N). Its horizontal resolution is now 420 lines and the picture S/N is rated at 48 decibels.

On the audio side, quadruple over-sampling and digital filtering improve high frequency phase characteristics and linearity for the entire audio spectrum. Twin digital-to-analog converters reduce crosstalk between left and right channels, and mirror-image right and left audio circuits, separated by the DC power and ground lines, further enhance separation and reduce crosstalk. Oxygen-free copper circuitry insulated from vibrations further improves the LD-S1's performance.

Philips recently announced a new format called CD-V, a variation of the Compact Disc with both digital audio and up to 10 minutes of analog video on a standard 5-inch CD. Philips will also sell the 12-inch and 8-inch videodiscs currently known as LaserVision under the CD-V name. The LD-S1 and all previous LaserVision players will play 8- and 12-inch videodiscs—whatever their name—but not the 5-inch ones. We hope the second name for the same format doesn't cause confusion.

Description. The LD-S1 is a handsome black machine with wood side panels accented by thin brass trim and gold legends. It is the largest of Pioneer's LV players, measuring 5-3/4 inches high by 18 wide by 18-1/2 deep and weighing 36.3 pounds.

The automated disc hatch occupies the top of the front. To its right are buttons for open/close, play, reverse and forward chapter skip, pause, reverse and forward scan, and last memory. Near the bottom right is a compartment with on/off buttons for the fluorescent panel display, the color screen (with status information when there

is no picture) and the digital memory, plus a rotary sharpness control, a stereo headphone jack, and a slider to control headphone level. The power button is at the lower left.

The display area houses discrete LED indicators for CX system, CLV disc, audio 1/left, audio 2/right, digital memory on, standby/play mode, and disc set (inside). A switchable fluorescent display has legends for chapters, followed by two digits, and frame or time, followed by up to five digits. If the disc has no chapter assignments, the display doesn't light. If the disc is CAV, "frame" plus numbers show; if it is CLV, "time" plus minutes and seconds are displayed. The remote control sensor is to the right of the display area.

The rear panel houses a small group of connectors, including an input/output connector Pioneer has not used in the U.S., although a computer that uses it is available in Japan. Minijacks for remote input and output connect the player to other Pioneer system remote units, allowing you to control the player even if it is hidden. There are two pairs of audio outputs, a pair for



The Pioneer LD-S1's digital memory allows special effects in both CAV and CLV.

**Test Report:
Pioneer LD-S1
Reference Laser
Vision Player**

DATA

Date of test: March 1987
Suggested retail price: \$2,000
Weight: 36.3 pounds
Dimensions: 5-3/8 x 18 x 18-1/2 inches (h/w/d)
Power requirements: 120 VAC, 60 Hz
Power consumption: 55 W
Disc format: LaserVision
Disc speeds: CAV, CLV
Play speed select: automatic
Still frame: all discs
Frame advance: all discs
Slow motion: 1 frame every 3 seconds, 1 frame every second, 1/16x, 1/8x, 1/4x, and 1/2x at all disc speeds without sound
Speed play: 1x, 2x and 3x at all disc speeds without sound
Rapid search: 40 seconds end to end
Maximum direct access time: 4 seconds for CAV discs; 6 seconds for CLV discs
Remote: IR wireless with buttons for stereo/left/right audio monitor, CX, auto digital/analog, eject, repeat A, repeat B, strobe motion, multi speed, + and - buttons for strobe and multi, still/step backward and forward, last/next chapter, reverse scan, play, forward scan, display, chapter/frame/time selector, search/memory, program, clear, and 10-digit keypad
Separate eject: yes
Counter digits: five for frame (CAV), chapter, or time (CLV)
Program start locator/index/cue: keypad direct access by chapter, frame (CAV) or time (CLV); programmed sequence by chapter (maximum 10 entries), repeat A/B, repeat chapter, repeat side

Analog audio: yes

Digital audio: yes

Video outputs: 2

Stereo audio outputs: 2, one analog/digital, one analog only

Other connectors: multi-pin input/output, opcode output, and system remote input

Accessories: remote control with batteries, audio and video patch cords with gold-plated plugs

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: rated, 420 lines; measured, 416 lines

S/N, video luminance: rated, 48 dB; measured, 45.4 dB, unweighted; 49.4 dB, weighted; 50.8 dB, weighted with sag compensation

S/N, chroma AM: 51.8 dB

S/N, chroma PM: 45.3 dB

Audio frequency response: rated—4 Hz to 20 kHz, +/−0.5 dB; measured, 10 Hz to 20 kHz, +/−0.2 dB (no test signals below 10 Hz) digital; 20 Hz to 20 kHz, +/−0.35 dB, analog

Dynamic range: digital audio: rated, 100+ dB; measured 99 dB

S/N, audio: digital, rated 102 dB, measured 99 dB; analog—measured 76 dB

Audio distortion, measured: digital, 0.02 percent; analog, 0.3 percent

Stereo separation: digital, rated 100 dB; measured, below noise level; analog, 74 dB

Overall picture quality: excellent

Audio quality: excellent

Ease of operation: excellent

Overall performance: excellent

Scale

Excellent	Fair
Very good	Weak
Good	Poor
Average	

either analog or digital audio and a pair for analog only, as well as two video outputs. There is no RF output for connection to an ordinary TV because the player's high resolution video output requires a wider bandwidth than is available under the NTSC RF broadcast format.

The LD-S1's slim remote control contains a ten-digit keypad and buttons for search/memory, display, chapter or frame/time, program, clear, reverse and forward scan, play, pause, and strobe motion. There are rockers for chapter skip, multi-speed and still/step. A +/− rocker affects both the strobe and multi-speed play.

The remote also has buttons for audio monitor CX, auto digital/analog audio output, eject, and repeat A, B.

Operation. Hooking up and using the LD-S1 is simple, but because there is no RF output it can only be connected to a TV with monitor inputs. For even better sound, connect the audio outputs to a hi-fi system.

When you insert a disc the machine starts to play automatically, in the auto digital mode with stereo, CX, and the digital circuitry already running. Most of the machine's controls are clearly labelled and logically arranged. Lines from the multi-speed and strobe buttons to the +/− button remind you to select an appropriate speed. The multi-speed, strobe, search/memory, program, display, and clear controls are reinforced by onscreen prompts. The remaining controls use LED indicators.

Performance. To date, the LD-S1 is the ultimate in home video and audio quality. Horizontal resolution is rated at 420 lines, and we measured it at 416 lines using our best test discs. Video S/N, rated at 48

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dB, was measured at 45.4 dB, unweighted; 49.4 dB, weighted; and 50.4 dB weighted with sag compensation. Chroma AM S/N measured 51.8 dB and chroma PM S/N measured 45.3 dB.

The player delivers excellent analog and digital audio. The improvements in the audio circuitry affect both types of audio, although the gains on analog discs are more modest. In analog mode, the frequency response is 20 Hertz to 20 kilohertz +0/-3.5 dB with less than 0.3 percent total harmonic distortion, 76 dB S/N, and 74 dB channel separation.

Its digital audio is rated to deliver virtually flat frequency response from as low as 10 Hz but our test disc signals only go down to 20 Hz. Measured frequency response was from 10 Hz to 20 kHz, +/- 0.2 dB with a measured S/N of 99 dB, a total harmonic distortion of 0.02 percent, and stereo separation of 99 dB. This level of performance is better than that on some CD players, and excellent for consumer video software.

Conclusion. The LD-S1's \$2,000 suggested price is steep, but this player is packed with quality and features. We're awed by its special effects, stunning video quality, and audio, which is good enough to put some CD players to shame. When you run out to see a demonstration, make sure the showroom monitor is good enough to keep up with this player.

Mitsubishi VHS Hi-Fi VCR



The HR-422UR's other highlights include an eight-event, two-week timer with onscreen programming from both the deck and the remote control, one-touch record (OTR) with an optional delay, hi-fi audio, a video output circuit to prevent clipping, an edit switch for better copies, a peak acceleration circuit for better edge definition, and digital auto tracking.

Mitsubishi's indexing system lets you find either the next or last indexed program, or enter an index number on the keypad. You can also add and erase index marks in addition to the ones put on the tape at the start of a recording from stop mode.

Description. The 17-pound HR-422UR is fairly compact at 3-3/4 inches high by 16-3/4 wide by 15 deep. On the front panel next to the cassette hatch are LED indicators for MTS stereo and SAP, a display area with a counter for hours, minutes, and seconds, and buttons for channel up and down tuning. Under the hatch are buttons for eject, power, rewind (search), play, fast forward (search), stop, the cassette hatch light, and OTR starting time and duration.

Further right are displays for hi-fi, audio level, and play mode, audio level slider controls, and two buttons for counter reset and counter memory. The front panel also houses a 3.5 mm headphone jack, a rotary headphone volume control, and the sensor for the infrared remote.

A lower compartment houses controls for slow/frame advance, + and -, pause/still, record, tracking, soft/sharp picture, detail, and edit. Four buttons cycle through the input and audio monitor options, record



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The tuning compartment on the top houses slide switches for TV/normal/HRC channel order and spacing, auto/manual fine tuning with + and - tuning buttons, and skip with write and erase buttons for altering the scan tuning memory. Another slide switch moves between low and high speed scan, a button resets clock and timer memories, and a screwdriver adjustment minimizes vertical jitter in still pictures and fast play.

Operation. The layout of the controls is unusual, but simple. The OTR buttons on the front are a good substitute for the hidden record buttons, and let you delay the start of recording to any upcoming quarter hour for a 24-hour period. This OTR acts like a simple one-event timer.

The hours, minutes, and seconds counter is easier to use than the typical four-digit counter because you don't have to translate the numbers. The indicators and displays clearly show machine status.

Ease of operation is very good/excellent because of a slightly confusing manual, but once you learn all the hidden features, the rating rises to excellent.

Performance. Like most VHS VCRs the HR-422UR's horizontal resolution is 240 to 250 lines, but Mitsubishi's HQ and additional circuitry make picture definition look much better. At the SP speed the video signal-to-noise ratio is 45.4 decibels unweighted. Chroma AM S/N is 46.2 dB, and chroma PM S/N is 44.5 dB. We rate overall video performance of the 422 as very good/excellent.

Its hi-fi performance is excellent with a frequency response of 20 Hertz to 20 kilo-Hertz, +0.9/-0.6 worst case at all speeds. Dynamic range is a measured 84 dB; stereo separation is 72 dB and total harmonic distortion is 0.3 percent. Linear performance is actually very good at SP and LP speeds but a huge 8.5 dB peak at 5 kHz impairs EP audio, so we rate overall linear track performance as average. Combining our video, audio, and ease-of-operation ratings, overall performance is very good/excellent.

Conclusion. Mitsubishi has made the HR-422UR easier to use, although the manual needs a little more work. Overall performance is very good/excellent, with some real high spots countered by a few weak ones. The most glaring faults of the linear audio are more than compensated for by the hi-fi audio. Check out the HR-422UR if you're looking for a top grade VCR. Its suggested price is \$900.

Test Report on page 104

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RCA Compact VHS Camcorder



RCA's experience in designing full-sized VHS camcorders shows in its first Compact VHS camcorder, the CPR100 Small Wonder. RCA has simplified the arrangement of the controls and eliminated some, like color control, altogether. In fact, for camera recording the Small Wonder has only five major controls: record/play, SP/EP record speed, run/pause, zoom, and review. If you want to get fancy you can add manual focus, manual zoom, manual iris, and macro range focusing. That's really simple.

RCA also offers one of the best Compact VHS pictures possible with enough flexibility to keep even a video buff happy for casual shooting. The Small Wonder uses an MOS solid state sensor, similar to the one in the CMR300 Pro Wonder camcorder. The Small Wonder delivers some color performance at light levels as low as 10 lux. However, more light is recommended to reduce graininess.

The Small Wonder's HQ circuits produce pictures with crisp edges, and other automatic features guarantee acceptable images under almost any conditions.

Description. The Small Wonder looks and feels like most other Compact VHS camcorders. The body weighs 3 pounds with the viewfinder, battery, and cassette adding another 1.2 lbs.

The grip on the right side has a large record run/pause button that sits under your thumb and a wide angle/tele power zoom rocker placed under the index and middle fingers. The security strap that runs around the back of your hand has a string attached to the lens cap and a snap to hold the cap while shooting. Further for-

ward are the microphone and jacks for an external mic and an earphone. At the top rear of the grip are the tracking control and jacks for the electronic viewfinder (EVF) and the A/V input/output.

The lens with manual focus sprouts from the front of the grip. The zoom ring has a stubby lever with a tiny button for macro focusing. Below is a box with the window for the infrared focusing sensor. To its left side are the auto/manual focus switch, a button for one-shot focus in manual mode, and a rotary control for manual iris adjustment. There is no auto fade button, but the manual iris allows manual fading.

On the front of the body are switches for camera/playback, SP/LP record speed, the review button, and controls for counter reset, EVF display, play, pause, fast forward (search), rewind (search), and stop. The cassette hatch is at the left rear.

The top of the camcorder's recorder section houses the power switch, the eject button, the EVF mount, and the battery release. The EVF may be tilted upward or rotated sideways. The back panel has the grooves for the battery and a jack for external DC power.

Accessories include a carrying strap, output adapters for feeding the signal to a TV or monitor, a VHS tape adapter, a one-hour battery, and a charger that doubles as an AC adapter.

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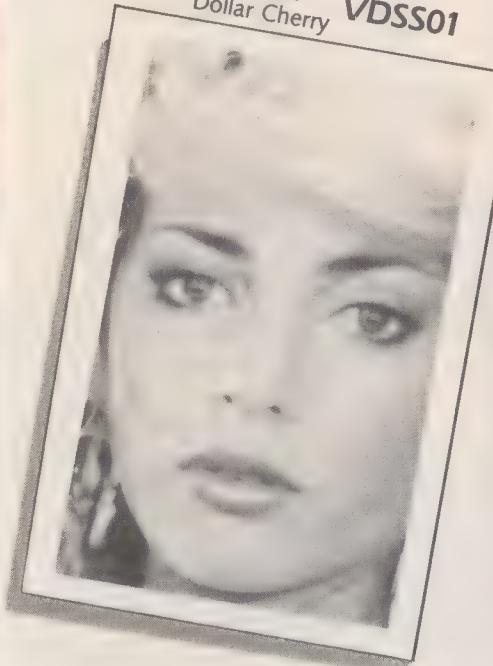
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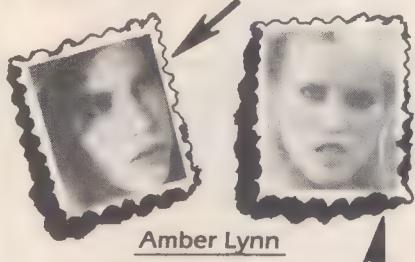
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Performance. Like all VHS machines the Small Wonder has a horizontal resolution of 240 to 250 lines, although HQ circuitry makes the picture appear sharper. Signals fed in electronically show less noise than pictures shot through the camera lens, especially at low light levels. The video signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) of electronic test signals is 43.5 decibels, unweighted. Chroma AM S/N is 42.9 dB, and

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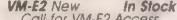
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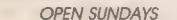
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chart continued from page 114

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: 240-250 lines
S/N, video luminance (SP/EP): 43.5/42.3 dB, unweighted; 47.1/46.6 dB, weighted
S/N, chroma AM (SP/EP): 43.1/41.7 dB
S/N, chroma PM (SP/EP): 41.4/41.3 dB
Audio frequency response: 63 Hz-10 kHz, +0.3/-3 dB, SP; 63 Hz-5 kHz,

+0.6/-3 dB, EP

S/N, audio: 38.9 dB

Audio distortion: 2.1 percent

Overall picture quality: very good compared to Compact VHS machines

Audio quality: very good compared to Compact VHS machines

Ease of operation: excellent

Overall performance: very good/excellent

Azden Wireless Microphones



If you've ever used a video camera or a camcorder you've probably been frustrated by voices on your tapes that sound like they're far away or covered by extraneous "off-mike" sounds. That's because most models have omnidirectional microphones mounted on top. But microphones usually work best when they are close to the sound source.

Although camcorders usually have external mike jacks, few people go to the trouble of using them because of the inconvenience of the microphone cord which trails from the camcorder to the subject. Azden, however, offers three wireless microphones that are easy to put in the right place without long wires or an assistant to hold the mikes.

Each one consists of a microphone and a transmitter that stay with the subject, and a receiver that plugs into the external microphone jack. All use the same WR-10 receiver but the microphones and transmitters vary. In the WMS-10 model the microphone is permanently attached to the transmitter. The WMS-20 uses the same transmitter but it has a jack for either of two supplied microphones. In the WMS-30, the transmitter is built into a hand-held microphone.

The WMS-10 is ideal for "miking" one person with its fixed clip-on microphone. The WMS-20 is more flexible, offering the choice of a clip-on microphone for one person or a hand-held microphone that can be pointed toward the wearer or anyone nearby. The self-contained WMS-30 is ideal for pass-along type interview situations.

Description. The receiver is a small black box slightly larger than a pack of king-sized cigarettes. It has a 13-1/2-inch whip antenna that collapses to a 5/8-inch stub. Its faces are bare but for information labels and a screw for a mounting bracket that slips into an accessory shoe and may be secured with a thumbwheel. Adhesive velcro is also supplied for mounting. The cable by which it attaches to the microphone jack runs from a bulge on the bottom.

All its controls are on a narrow side panel. They include a signal present indicator, a power switch, and a frequency switch. (All the microphones operate on either two of frequencies: F1 at 49.830 megaHertz, and F2 at 49.890 mHz.) It receives FM using a double superheterodyne system.

There is also a monitor jack for a supplied earphone and a battery compartment

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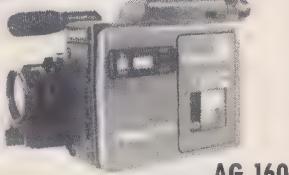
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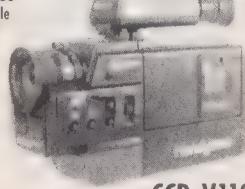
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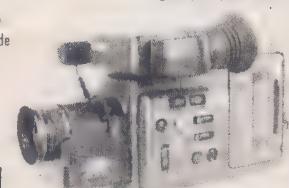
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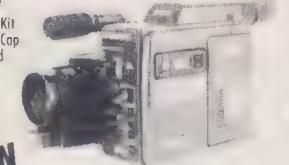
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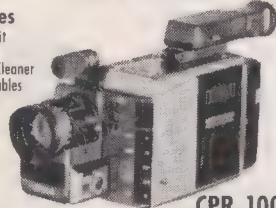


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10. Microphone



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for a common nine-volt battery. The receiver with battery adds about 6.5 ounces to the weight of a camera or camcorder. A battery lasts about 20 hours.

The transmitter for the WMS-10 is a smidgen shorter but a quarter inch wider than the receiver. The microphone in its windscreens is a half-inch sphere that snaps onto a clothing clip. It attaches to the transmitter by a three-foot cable. Together, they weigh about 3.5 ounces with an AA cell. Battery life is about 20 hours. The transmitter's surfaces are bare but for labels, a belt clip, and power and frequency switches. The F1 and F2 frequencies are the same for all the microphones and receivers.

The transmitter for the WMS-20 system is almost identical. The sole difference is that it uses a 3.5 mm mini-phone jack instead of a microphone cord. The jack accepts a microphone similar to the one with the WMS-10 transmitter (the EX-503, one ounce), or a hand-held version (the EX-242, two ounces) with a spherical mesh head. Both are supplied with the WMS-20.

The WMS-30 uses a hand-held microphone/transmitter combination powered by a nine-volt battery. It is a 9-1/2-inch long tapered cylinder, 1-5/8 inches in diameter at its widest point. A bulging wind screen covers the mike. On a flattened side are an indicator and a switch for off/F1/F2 selection. A 16-1/2 inch antenna wire dangles from the bottom. With battery, it weighs 5.2 ounces but it seems lighter because it looks as if it should weigh more.

Operation. All three systems are easy to use. Mount the receiver on a camera's accessory shoe, or use the Velcro, and plug its cable into the external microphone jack. If necessary connect one of the microphones to the transmitter. Attach the microphone or the transmitter or both to the subject's clothing and conceal the mike cord if necessary. Switch the transmitter and the receiver to the same frequency and turn on the power.

The indicator on the receiver will light if a signal is being received. Use the earphone to make sure that you are receiving the audio with a minimum of interference. Switch between frequencies for better sound quality; remember, both the receiver and the transmitter must use the same. When the sound is right, frame your picture and start shooting.

Since almost all wireless microphones use the same frequencies, listen carefully to make sure your receiver is picking up only your subject. Azden cautions against using the system near broadcast studios, on airplanes, and in airports. Beware also of blasting sites with posted "turn-off-transmitter" signs. Overall, operation is excellent.

Performance. The WR-10 receiver is rated for a reception sensitivity of two microvolts, which we confirmed with a sig-

nal-to-noise ratio of 50 decibels. Frequency response ranges from 300 to 3,000 Hertz, +/−3 dB, and from 100 to 7,000 Hz, +/−20 dB. In short, it covers only the vocal range and is not intended for music.

All the microphone/receiver combinations are rated to operate at distances of up to 100 feet, line of sight. However, the instructions caution that fluorescent lights, telephone lines, wire fences, walls, and corners may degrade the sound. Under the worst conditions we could devise—a four-

foot wide hallway with overhead fluorescents and telephone wires in both walls—we got clear reception at up to 40 feet before noise started to rise. Under these conditions the subject had to holler to be heard or recorded with an on-camera mike.

In a park, away from most forms of interference and with fresh batteries, we separated the transmitter from the receiver by 115 feet before the signal strength dropped 3 dB, and by over 200 feet before the signal was completely drowned by noise. Signal

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Videotests

strength also drops as the batteries weaken; however we did not measure the transmission range as a function of battery voltage. After the rated 20 hours of continuous use with alkaline batteries, the S/N ratio was down 19 dB. The figures are slightly better than those for the only other wireless microphone we have tested, the discontinued RCA VM001. We rate the Azdens as good within the limitations imposed by their range.

Conclusion. Any of these microphones is an extremely useful addition to your arsenal of video hardware. Instead of having subjects sound far away and possibly drowned out by ambient sound, they will sound clear and "on mic." After spending \$1,000 or more to get a good picture another \$150 to \$200 is a small price for good audio. We recommend them all with a little extra praise for the WMS-20. For top flexibility try the WMS-20 plus the WM-30.



From left to right, Azden's WR-10 receiver, WM-20 transmitter, EX-242 mic, WM-30 mic, WR-10 receiver, and WM-10 mic.

Test Report: Azden WMS-10, WMS-20 and WMS-30 Wireless Microphones

DATA

Date of test: March 1987

Manufacturer: Azden Corporation, 147 New Hyde Park Road, Franklin Square, NY 11010

Suggested retail price: WMS-10, \$150; WMS-20, \$175; WMS-30, \$200; WM-30 (mic only), \$100

Weight: WM-10 mic, 3.6 oz; WM-20 transmitter, 3 oz, WM-20 mics, 1 and 2 oz; WM-30 5.2 oz; WR-10 receiver used with all mics, 6.5 oz (all weights with battery, where applicable)

Dimensions: WM-10/20 transmitter, 3-1/4 x 2-1/2 x 7/8 inches (h/w/d) excluding mic and cable; WM-30 mic/transmitter, 9-1/2 inches long, 1-5/8 inches max. diameter; WR-10, 5-3/4 x 3 x 1-1/8 inches (h/w/d) overall

Power requirements: WM-10/20, 1.5 VDC (1-AA cell); WM-30 and WR-10, 9VDC (1-6F22 or S-006P standard battery)

Power consumption: WM-10/20, 27 mA; WR-10, 20 mA

Transmission/reception frequencies, all models: F1—49.830 MHz; F2—49.890 MHz

Inputs to transmitter: WM-10/WM-30 attached electret condenser mic; WM-20 3.5 mm mini jack for supplied EX-503 and EX-242 mics

Modulation system: FM

Transmitter modulation sensitivity, supplied mic(s): 94 dB SPL at 3.3 kHz

WR-10 reception sensitivity: 2 microvolts per meter

Microphone output: 3 millivolts into 300 ohms; 3.5 mm plug on 22-inch cable

Earphone output: 0.6 volt into 10 ohms; 3.5 mm jack

Accessories: windscreens on all mics, earphone, carrying case

RESULTS & RATINGS

Audio frequency response: 300-3,000 Hz, +/3 dB; 100-7,000 Hz, +3/-20 dB.

Audio S/N: 50 dB deteriorating with distance and battery exhaustion

Total harmonic distortion: 4 percent, escalating with interference and signal weakening

Overall audio performance: good, recommended for voice only

Ease of operation: excellent

Overall performance: good/very good

WHERE'S BUSTER?

continued from page 54

late 1970s, at the urging of the American Film Institute, Rohauer and Killiam signed a truce and have avoided further proceedings against each other. For videophiles, this means the Keaton films presently available will probably remain so.

The importance of having them in easy reach of a mass audience is as incalculable as being able to pick up a book and see Michelangelo's *The Last Judgement*. Kevin Brownlow, co-producer of the upcoming Keaton documentary, reports that Donald O'Connor, who played Keaton in the horrendous *The Buster Keaton Story*, called Keaton "the D.W. Griffith of comedy." "That really sums it up," says Brownlow. "Keaton was one of the most remarkably talented, intuitive filmmakers of any period, besides being an exceptionally talented comedian. I think his movies were a bit above the heads of some audiences at that time. It's only now we're seeing the true value of his works."

A lifelong smoker, Buster Keaton died of lung cancer on Feb. 1, 1966, after having achieved the critical and commercial revival that had eluded him for a large portion of his life. Dozens of television commercials, appearances on programs like *Playhouse 90*, *Twilight Zone*, and *Route 66*, stage plays, and wonderful small bits in many '60s movies kept him comfortable through the end of his life.

"Keaton was very down on himself," says Rohauer. "You must remember, he didn't have any ego. While Charlie Chaplin had all the ego any man could ever have, Keaton had none. He always felt that his films could have been better, and that he was not successful."

The poor fool. The poor clown. We know better.

VIDEO TOY CHEST

continued from page 62

that works like an electronic Etch-a-Sketch.

Sega will also soon introduce eyeglasses that make the on-screen action look three-dimensional. *Wallball-3D*, a racquetball game designed for the glasses, makes it look like balls are coming from every direction, while *3D Gunner* is a space game that sends rocketships whizzing past your head.

Atari, meanwhile, has staged a remarkable comeback since losing \$360 million in 1984. Late in 1985, it reintroduced the first home videogame console, the 2600, for a remarkably low \$40. Last year Atari introduced the 7800, which accepts all software for the 2600 as well as newer games requiring more memory. Atari also convinced computer software companies like Broderbund and Electronic Arts to trans-

late games like *Skyfox*, *One on One*, and *Lode Runner* for the system. This licensing plan, as well as its 2600 compatibility gives the 7800 the largest library of games by far.

More than anyone else, though, Atari appears to be looking toward the future of videogames with its new XE system. The XE, due to be introduced around Christmas, has 64 kilobytes of memory and a keyboard for playing sophisticated games like *Zork*, *Ultima*, and *Flight Simulator*. At \$150, it could be the ideal game system for players who want more complexity but who don't want to invest in home computers.

All three companies say they will avoid the pitfalls that wounded the videogame industry earlier. If you bought a videogame system seven years ago and soon grew bored, it may be time to look into the new models, as well as the other items in the new video toy chest. While most are expressly for kids, toy companies are exploring ways of using video technology that many adult video manufacturers have yet to emulate. Innovative techniques, like random access coding and over-the-air infrared signals, may have broader implications for grown-up gear. Unless we pay attention, our kids may end up knowing more about video than we do.

KIDVID

continued from page 66

ball making things and people disappear in another videotape we made called *The Cocoa Code Caper*. If you haven't tried it, you'll be amazed at how easy it is. While holding the camera as still as possible (better yet, mounting it on a tripod), simply record a person in one place, pause the camera, have the person leave, and unpause the camera. The person will seem to have disappeared, an effect heightened by magic incantations or dramatic music.

Or the person can simply move to a different on-screen spot during the pause. The person will then seem to pop from one area to another, or to glide if he moves just a bit between each of several pauses. The evil magician in *The Cocoa Code Caper*, for example, appears to move through the forest by invisible leaps and accidentally drops a potion which magically transports things. The potion is used later by the boys to send coded messages to each other via a box of "specially marked" Cocoa Krispies.

This effect, of course, is a video version of stop-action, not as finely tuned as in film animation but then not nearly as time-consuming or expensive either. Probably the most fun Matt has with the video camera is shooting stop-action videos with his toy characters. He shoots close-in and angles up to give them an aura of size and power. With the help of friends he fills in dialogue and moves the figures between takes so that no hands appear in the scene. It's

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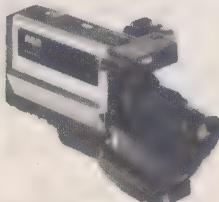
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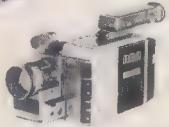
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surprising how well this works; just don't let the pause button stay on too long.

You can dress the magician with handy household objects that should look cheerfully exotic out of context: an old hat, preferably no longer in fashion, a kimono for a robe, jars of colored water for the potions, and an upturned goldfish bowl for a crystal ball (filled with dry ice for smoke).

DUBBING

If your VCR has an audio-dubbing feature, which allows you to change the sound without altering the picture, you have even more creative options. Since there are only three in our family and six characters in *Wong Is White*, some of us had to play multiple roles. With clever costuming and voice changes this isn't too great a problem—until two characters played by the same person must come face to face.

We solved this in two ways. One scene was carefully shot to block the spot where one of my characters was supposedly sitting. For the other, Matt dressed as one of my characters, stood on a stool, and kept his back to the camera. I was facing both him and the camera as I spoke.

As we videotaped, we allowed time for the "absent" character to dub dialogue in later. This was our first dubbing effort, so our timing was sometimes off—during both the taping and the dubbing stages. But if you practice enough and adjust the dialogue, you can overcome this.

Of course, you could dub an entire tape, as we did with our two-minute video, *The Cat with the Rolls*. First we followed our two cats around, videotaping their antics and injecting such elements as rolling marbles for them to chase. Then we watched the tape to get ideas for the storyline.

We gave our cats the roles of an actress and her dippy agent. Then we sketched out a script that suggested the latter's confusion between (acting) roles and (marble) rolls and dubbed it in less than an hour. Obviously, this can be done with any videotaped material, whether recorded by a camera or a VCR. And it's more fun than you might think. After all, Woody Allen started in filmmaking by dubbing new dialogue into a Japanese spy movie for *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*

If you have two VCRs or a VCR and a camcorder, you can edit in video as well as audio. Our current production is a sequel to *The Cat with the Rolls*, in which the actress finally gets a starring role in *And God Created Bebe*. To herald her arrival in Hollywood, we show fireworks going off, using a scene edited from a tape we call our "Image Bank."

It's a collection of mini-scenes we hope to use one day in another videotape. It includes a snake, a parade, zoo animals, anything you might have trouble coming up with on the spot. When you need it, you just record it from the Image Bank tape onto the one you're videotaping, dubbing in new audio as necessary.

Before you begin to experiment with your own planning and production, probably the first thing you should do is to let your child have some spontaneous fun with the videocamera. Just let him shoot away with the carefree abandon afforded by the low cost and re-recordability of videotape. As you move on to more structured projects, you'll encounter frustrations and seemingly insoluble problems. But as you work through them, you'll not only take pride in what you *do* accomplish, you'll appreciate all the more what the pros can do.

THE BRINK

continued from page 70

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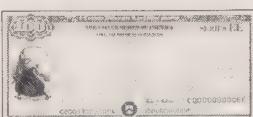
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Sometime in the mid-'60s, Americans became multiple-TV families, just as they are becoming two-VCR households in the '80s.

The pattern is recurring in satellite TV households. Homeowners are discovering that, for the price of a second (sometimes cheaper) satellite receiver, it's possible to enjoy different satellite channels in different parts of the house. In fact, Luxor, Kenwood, and other manufacturers have designed slave receivers for just this purpose. Because the second receiver doesn't need all the complicated features and memory of the main unit, it can cost several hundred dollars less. While the main receiver is delivering a classic movie in the living room, mom can keep an eye on a shopping channel in the kitchen while dad or junior watches a ball game on the patio.

MASTERS AND SLAVES

Masters and slaves have also been infected by the infrared bug. Like most VCRs and large-screen television sets, all but the most basic satellite receivers now come with infrared remotes that can change satellites as well as channels. Like the remotes for other video products, these sometimes function from remote locations. Luxor, for example, offers a remote control that extends remote usage to other rooms in the home. Radio Shack, Revox, and other companies offer remotes that will do the same thing for most other brands of infrared-equipped receivers.

It's still possible to buy one of those rough-and-ready, do-everything-yourself antenna systems which were the norm less than ten years ago, when satellite TV really got started. These systems cost less than \$1,000 excluding installation, but their main value lies in showing just how far satellite TV has come. Perhaps the most notable feature missing from these low-end systems is any sort of remote controlled dish drive. If you want to switch from one satellite to another, you have to go outside and push the dish back and forth, or crank it up or down, until you hit the signal you're looking for. The receivers not only lack memory and automatic fine tuning, but most also lack stereo sound and onscreen satellite and channel information displays. It is possible in some cases to add a dish drive, stereo, a descrambler, and other features later, but the result can be a string of black boxes and a mass of wires.

On the whole, though, if you considered investing in a satellite system but decided to wait until the scrambling situation settled, or until dishes shrank, or until systems became less expensive and easier to use, your time may have come.

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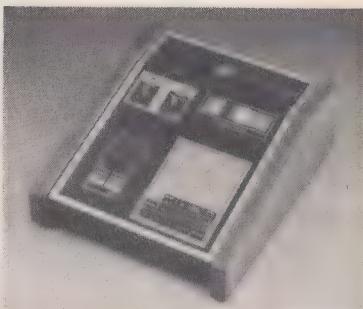
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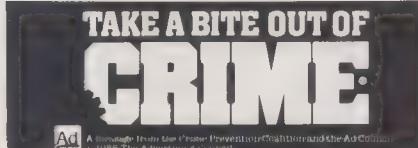
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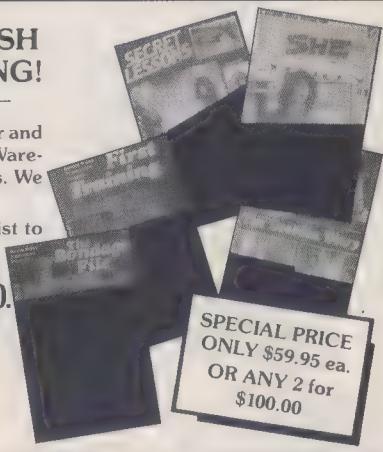
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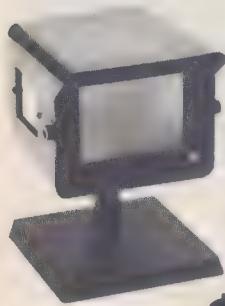
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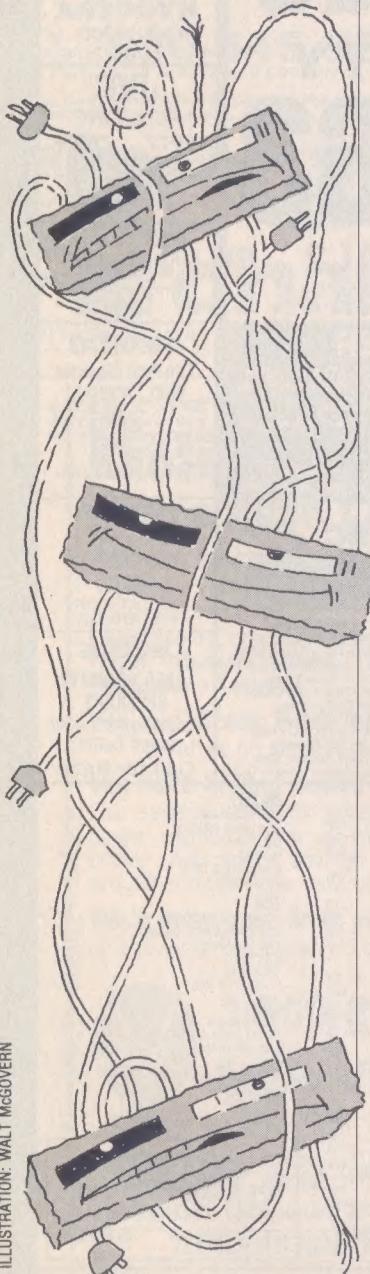
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Off the Air

The Last Word

Wiring Mania

By Bob Brewin



I thought about buying one of those nifty surround sound devices for my VCR, but decided against it because I'm tired of drilling holes in my walls.

Black and Decker ranks at the top of my list of video toolmakers. All that wizardry from Sony, Panasonic, and Dolby could not fit into my house—a decidedly low-tech, pre-electricity townhouse—without Black and Decker's help. It doesn't matter if your own house is old or new—sooner or later, unless you own one TV with rabbit ears, you're going to need 3/8-inch or 1/2-inch drill bits.

You can't be a video revolutionary without miles of wires to hook your equipment together. And once you start stringing wire all over the place you're going to need to haul out the drill to make the holes necessary to run the wire from one end of the house to the other.

That's why I gave up on the surround sound processor—too much wire and too many holes already. I have two Beta hi-fi VCRs hooked up to the stereo, which is in turn hooked up to the speakers. That's 14 wires—four from each VCR to a Radio Shack Tape Control Center switchbox (because my stereo amplifier doesn't have enough in and out ports), for a total of eight wires, plus four from the control center to the amplifier and two from the amplifier to the speakers.

Since these components are stacked on several different wood shelves, I had to drill holes to snake the wires to and fro. We're talking large holes, half an inch in diameter, because along with the wires I had to get the

plugs as well through the holes.

That's not all it takes to operate two hi-fi VCRs and one TV (a common home set-up). It takes six other wires to carry the video in and out signals between these three pieces of equipment, plus four separate antenna leads to shunt the signal from my rooftop aerial to the VCRs, TV and FM radio. That's 20 wires—with most requiring at least one hole either in the shelving or, for the antenna, through the walls and floors—just to be able to dupe a tape from one VCR to another and to watch TV on the set.

This stuff doesn't work without power, so add four power cords, which brings the wire count up to 24. That jumps to 25 because, naturally, I don't have four outlets nearby, so I have to throw in an extension cord. Wires 27, 28, and 29 were easy to acquire—I was running so many RF signals from one antenna wire that I needed a signal booster, also from Radio Shack, to amplify the over-the-air TV signal going to the VCRs and the TV. But the signal booster amplified the FM signals so well that I needed to keep the FM trap switch on. I had to buy a signal splitter and run two wires from it to two signal amplifiers. Then I ran a wire from the FM amplifier to the FM tuner.

Like many other mid-tech folks, I also own a compact disc player and a record player, meaning more wires and more holes. Three wires each accommodated the CD player and the turntable (two audio and one power each). The amplifier also has a pow-

er cord, and there's a ground wire running from the record player to the amplifier, bringing the wire total for my "average home entertainment center" to 37.

The real trouble with new video gear is that the engineers don't use it at home. They forget that all the wires and plugs are in the back, not the front. The only way to hide this wire tangle is to enclose it, meaning that every time you want to change a link it all has to be hauled out of the cramped space.

The inventors of video add-ons also don't realize that other add-on equipment has been invented. Amplifiers have a limited amount of "tape in/out" plugs, yet there's a great variety of equipment vying to be plugged into your amp—or into the RF signal chain, which is already cluttered with amplifiers, boosters, cable decoders and more.

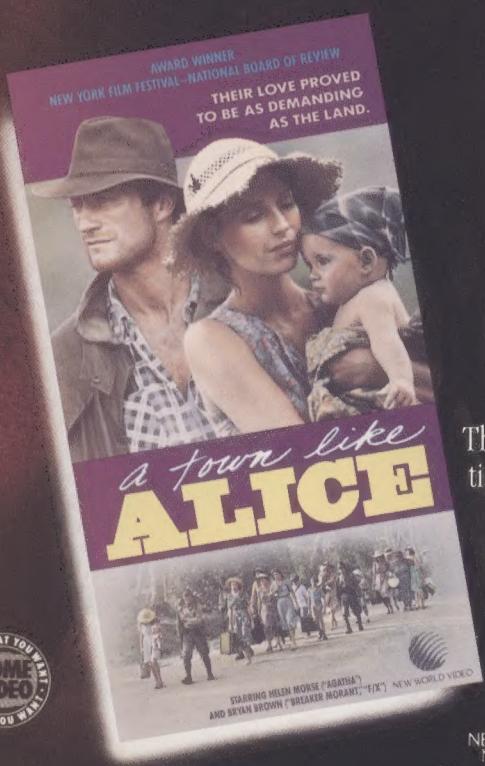
If I added a cable TV service with one premium channel to my installation, my wire total would climb above 40. I'd need another power cord, a signal wire from a cable box to the distribution amplifier, and another wire to separate out the premium service. If the cable system carried a stereo audio signal from MTV or HBO on the FM band (as many do), I'd need another wire to snake over to the FM set.

This simple system is too complicated already. If I forget to throw a switch, one of the VCRs' MTS TV tuners goes on and I end up with a picture from ABC and sound from an FM station.

Maybe I'll take up reading for night-time diversion. It's so much simpler. □

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